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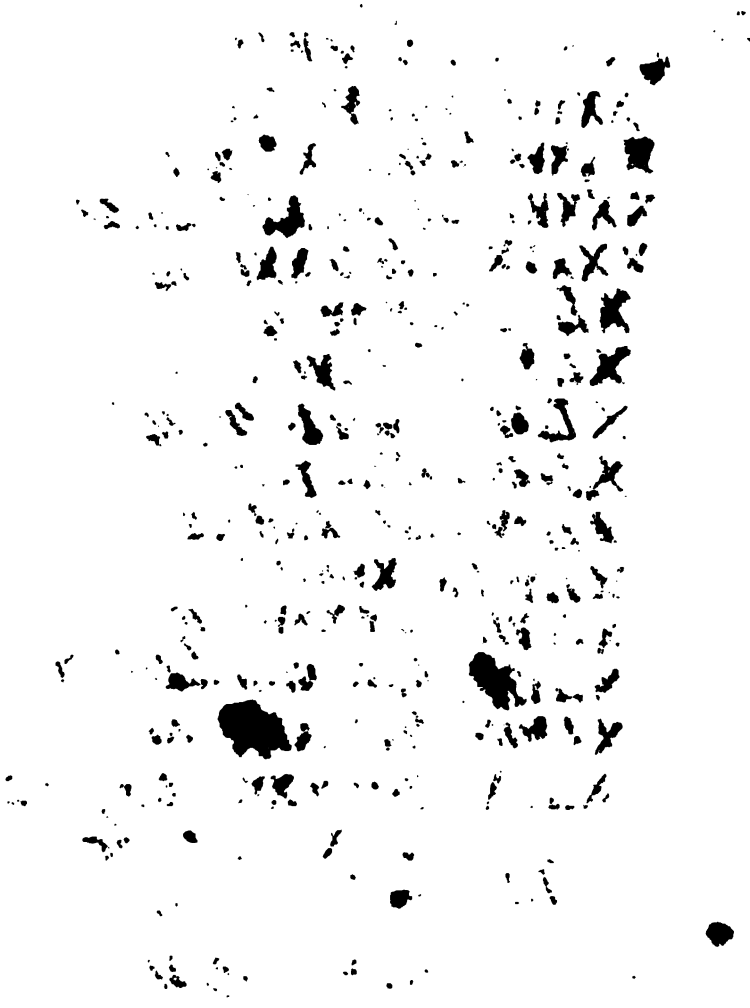
Lectures XXXV — 1 Heb. V. 17
XXXVI — John VII. 46
XXXVII Psalm XCIX. 3
XXXVIII — Luke XVII. 20, 21
XXXIX — Acts XXI — 14
XL Matt IV. 4
XLI — Luke VI. 37
XLII James I. 13, 14
XLIII — 1 Tim I. 17
XLIV Matt XXI. 22
XLV Ex. XVIII. 20
XLVI Matt XXVIII. 19
XLVII Matt [redacted] and Acts II. 38
19 — XLVIII Matt [redacted] 14
XLIX Matt XXVI. 26, 27, 28
L — 1 Cor XI. 23, 24, 25
LI 1 Cor XI. 23, 24, 25

Sermons 3 — Acts VIII. 30, 31



FIFTY-TWO LECTURES

ON THE

CATECHISM

OF THE

CHURCH OF ENGLAND:

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

THREE INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSES

ON THE SUBJECT,

Addressed to the Inhabitants of the Parish of Hinxworth, Herts.

DEDICATED, BY PERMISSION, TO

THE RIGHT REV. BOWYER EDWARD,

LORD BISHOP OF ELY.

BY THE

REV. SIR ADAM GORDON, BART. M. A.

LATE OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD; RECTOR OF WEST TILBURY, ESSEX; PREBENDARY OF BRISTOL; AND CHAPLAIN TO HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF GORDON.

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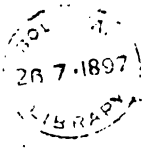
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CONTENTS

OF

THE THIRD VOLUME.

LECTURE XXXV.—Page 1.

On the Duty of Prayer in general—Part II.

LECTURE XXXVI.—Page 19.

The first Discourse on the Lord's Prayer.

LECTURE XXXVII.—Page 37.

The Lord's Prayer—First Petition: "Hallowed "be thy Name."

LECTURE XXXVIII.—Page 51.

The Lord's Prayer—Second Petition: "Thy "Kingdom come."

LECTURE XXXIX.—Page 71.

The Lord's Prayer—Third Petition: "Thy Will "be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven."

LECTURE XL.—Page 81.

The Lord's Prayer—Fourth Petition: "Give us "this Day our daily Bread."

LECTURE XLI.—Page 105.

The Lord's Prayer—Fifth Petition: "And for- "give us our Trespasses, as we forgive them "that trespass against us."

LECTURE XLII.—Page 123.

The Lord's Prayer—Sixth Petition: "And lead "us not into Temptation, but deliver us from "Evil."

LECTURE XLIII.—Page 141.

The Lord's Prayer—Conclusion: "For thine is "the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for "ever and ever."

LECTURE XLIV.—Page 157.

On the religious Improvement to be derived from duly understanding the different Parts of the Lord's Prayer.

LECTURE XLV.—Page 177.

On the Nature and Number of the Sacraments: with a short View of the five Popish Sacraments.

LECTURE XLVI.—Page 195.

On Baptism—First Part.

LECTURE XLVII.—Page 219.

On Baptism—Second Part: On the Requisites for Baptism, and the Expediency of receiving it.

LECTURE XLVIII.—Page 235.

On Infant Baptism.

LECTURE XLIX.—Page 253.

On the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper—Part I.

LECTURE L.—Page 273.

On the Lord's Supper—Part II.

LECTURE LI.—Page 289.

On the Lord's Supper—Part III.

APPENDIX,

Comprising three Discourses, addressed to the Inhabitants of Hinxworth, introductory to the preceding Lectures.

Sermon I...... Page 311
Sermon II...... 333
Sermon III...... 357

LECTURES,

&c.

LECTURE XXXV.

OF THE DUTY OF PRAYER IN GENERAL.

SECOND PART.

1 THESSALONIANS, v. 17.

Pray without ceasing.

On a subject of such vast importance as *prayer*, it is impossible to be too full or explicit. It is a duty that cannot be too much enforced, because the neglect of it exposes us to all the evil and misery, both of this life and the next, and reduces us to a state of savage nature. Even among the most barbarous and unenlightened people upon earth, we find some are not without a sense of their own weakness, and have a dependence on a superior power: not knowing the *true God*, who attracts the service of his creatures by the delightful call of love and grati-

tude, they address themselves, through the less noble principle of fear, to evil spirits, whose power to hurt them, their ignorance and depravity inclines them to dread and worship: but the blessed light of the Gospel being the grand means of obtaining every good we need, hath rescued us from this state of darkness, and taught us the true and only object of prayer and praise. Prayer is the positive act, by which we prove and increase our faith in God—by which we strengthen our hope of endless peace and joy, and every thing valuable; our best support and consolation in this life, and the appointed method of qualifying us for a post of eternal praise and humble dependence hereafter. It is, above all Christian duties, *that* which we should chiefly cultivate, as being so necessary to a state of trial, want, and imperfection. In the former part of my discourse upon the *general* duty of prayer I considered it in the following points of view:

As it is the chief means of obtaining the grace of God, that is, his *favour*, and the aid of his Holy Spirit, without which, we shall not be able to do any thing acceptable to him.

In what remains to complete the subject, upon the enlarged view I have judged proper for your further instruction, I shall proceed at this time to consider,

First, The *necessity* that seems to be laid

upon us, from our particular situation here, of following the Apostle's advice in the text, of praying always: I shall therefore explain the more general sense in which the words, *Pray without ceasing*, may be received by us.

Secondly, I shall call your attention to the subject of our prayers, by instancing the particulars for which we may safely pray; and,

Lastly, I shall dwell upon what relates to the time of prayer, which, in a more particular point of view, concerns the exhortation in the text, of praying continually, or *without ceasing*; which will lead to several observations, that naturally present themselves on this subject.

It is quite needless to use many words in proving, that, in a state of imperfection, we are unavoidably exposed to continual wants: the experience of every one present will immediately subscribe to this. The natural consequence of our wants is a desire of relief: the conviction of our own insufficiency to obtain it, leads us to look up to a higher power; and the conditions of our success, are proper applications to him. From all these undeniable truths it follows, that, as we are in a continual need of help, and as it can be obtained no other way, so there is a necessity to *pray without ceasing*. Indeed, such is our dependence upon God, that we are obliged, not only to do every thing for his sake; but also to seek from him the very ability of

doing so; for if HE does not assist us, in whom alone all goodness and power dwells, how is it possible we shall be able to do any thing to please him? One sense, then, of the words to *pray without ceasing*, is to live under such a constant conviction of our spiritual wants, as to incline us to solicit the very disposition to pray; and, in truth, this happy necessity of having recourse to an infinite Power, under every difficulty, instead of being grievous to us, should be our greatest consolation; for, to be assured that there is ONE, *who knoweth all things*, and is mighty to save, who hath all things under his dominion, who cannot err, who hath promised, and is faithful to perform—this is enough to support us under the heaviest trials to which our mortal nature is subject; and this will be the never-failing effect, when our faith has triumphed over our weakness, and our enlightened reason disposes us to becoming resignation. If men considered at all, they could not avoid confessing, with the profoundest gratitude, the prodigious favour of being allowed to address God with confidence. What unspeakable happiness might be derived from the gracious privilege of disclosing the secrets of our trembling hearts, and holding conversation with the Majesty on high, with this merciful Benefactor, through the means of *prayer!* One invaluable character of this duty is, that God himself invites us to

it; and, as one of the ancient fathers * well observes, we may therefore be secure of his ready will to grant us those good things which his unerring wisdom dictates we should ask of him. Another sense in which we must *pray without ceasing*, is to keep our will in constant submission to the divine will: thus may we be said to *pray always*, in a general acceptation of the words, though we do not make use of any *outward* forms whatever. Nothing is truly good, but conformity to God's will: it is the essence of Christian duty, and consequently of prayer. In proportion as this spirit actuates us, we *pray without ceasing*; for, if our affections are duly placed on things above, we shall ever be inclined to pronounce this inestimable and all-sufficient prayer, *Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven*; for *this* is the prayer of the heart; viz. the *will* turned to God. The divine Author of our religion, Jesus Christ, says of *himself*, that *he always did what pleased his heavenly Father*: he is our pattern, he taught us the above words, and thus addressed his Father, who, in condescending mercy, vouchsafes likewise to be called OURS. We must never cease praying, therefore, to Christ, to intercede for power to fulfil God's will in all things, even as he has *himself* set us the example: then

* Cyprian.

will our whole conduct be sanctified—then will all our deeds become a *continual* sacrifice, incessant prayer, and uninterrupted love. But the reason that we do not employ this prayer of the *heart*, is the very same that causes our losing the fruit of every other kind of prayer: it is want of *faith:* we do not believe that, if we could obtain this spirit of prayer, all other needful things would be added unto us, and therefore we do not apply for it as we *ought*. St. James expressly asserts this to be the true cause of our non-success and continued imperfection: and the same Apostle advises us to pray when we are in trouble, because thereby we should most surely find consolation: but, alas! we are so wretched, from the deep corruption of our nature, that even this heavenly employment (the balsam for the sorest wounds) proves often burdensome, instead of a comfort to us; and a greater truth cannot be advanced, than that the rareness or coolness of our prayers is the principal cause of all our other infidelities. Divine grace is the only true good; it is that alone can improve and make us easy here—it is that which will constitute our future happiness; and yet it is that only which we think least of—which we have not faith to ask, or patience to wait for. We may easily determine our great deficiencies in this, by comparison of the earnestness we should use, were we sure that

riches or power were to be had for frequent and importunate solicitations. To close this head, let us pray incessantly for grace to believe, that the promise of Christ is infallibly certain: let us *ask*, *seek*, and *knock* for *that*, and it must be our own fault if we do not find the blessed effect of our *never-ceasing* and humble petions.

2. I shall now proceed in the regular order of my Discourse, to consider what the things are, for which we may safely pray. According to the *rule* laid down by the Psalmist in this respect, it seems, that, with regard to the things of this life, we should only present a general petition: *Commit thy ways unto the Lord, and put thy trust in him* (says he), *and he shall bring it to pass:* which words imply the utmost submission to his wisdom in all things as the sure ground of success to our desires (Psalm xxxvii. 5): and his exhortation in Psalm lv. 23, infers the same; *Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall nourish thee.* Therefore, unless it be in some particular case, it is best not to indulge any vain hopes of happiness from worldly prospects, *but, in whatever state we are, therewith to be content;* to be diligent and faithful in the parts allotted us, and not to be over-anxious or zealous for any thing but *the doing good;* the promise annexed to which, and to the *dwelling in the land* (or being satisfied

with our lot), is, that *verily thou shalt be fed*:— by which doubtless is meant, an honest discharge of our respective duties, and a pious trust in God's care of his creatures. Agreeable to this, likewise, is the lesson of our blessed Lord himself, in St. Matthew, chap. vi. ver. 33, who reproaches the over-careful worldling with want of faith in distrusting the providence of God towards the best work of his hands, when we have daily proof how abundantly he provides for all the lower order of his creatures, even the herbs, and the grass of the field. And accordingly he proposes as the *first* object of our care, *the kingdom of God and his righteousness*; with assurance, that nothing *needful* of an inferior nature shall be denied us; for he will not suffer the righteous to lack any manner of thing that is good for them. And the Apostle, in his admonition to the Hebrews (xiii. 5), delivers the same doctrine in different words: *Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.*

On great and trying occasions, indeed, it is not only natural that we should look up to the place whence comes our help, but we are *commanded* by God so to do. *Call upon me* (saith the Almighty) *in the time of trouble, so will I hear thee, and thou shalt praise me.* In deep

distress, and when enemies rise up against us, and when trouble is near at hand, we have no sure refuge but in this mighty rock of defence; and if we cry unto him with sorrowful and sincere hearts, he will turn and will help us. It is, therefore, neither proper nor wise to pray for riches or power, or any of the captivating delights of this fleeting scene, because we cannot be assured, but that they will work more harm than good to us; for their very nature is to strengthen our love of this world, and the overweening love of the world is expressly declared *to be enmity to God.* The example of Solomon should be our rule, to qualify every other petition; to pray for a wise, that is, a religious heart, to use all the things aright, which God has already bestowed upon us; not to be greedily careful for the things of the *morrow, since sufficient to the day is the evil thereof,* without multiplying causes of temptation; and remembering always, as a check to all vain and rash desires, that this *night our souls may be required of us, and then whose shall all these things be on which we have set our foolish hearts?* But it is very different with regard to the graces which are necessary for us. These spiritual wants we need, in order (as intimated in the beginning of my Discourse) to give us a true sense of the end of this life, and to *fit* us for another. For these, we are to pray

particularly, earnestly, and *absolutely*, without any qualifications or exceptions, and *without ceasing*, that is, daily and hourly, as we feel occasion of *aid*; and this we do for this sound and satisfactory reason, because we know these things are always proper for us to ask, and always agreeable to the will of God to grant us. And here, again, the sense of *praying without ceasing*, is clearly illustrated by the parables Christ hath left us on the very subject, where he exhorts to perseverance in prayer, from the example and effects of *importunity*, in the cases of the widow, and the friend, and the judge; drawing this encouraging conclusion, that if men who are evil, can be prevailed upon to give good gifts to their children, much more certain may we be, that God will not deny the grace or gift of the *Holy Spirit to them that ask him.* And it is further worthy our *notice*, that this parable and admonition of instant prayer, immediately follow the very form of prayer our blessed Lord was pleased to leave us: but of this in its proper place. Now, *Christians* cannot be ignorant that all their prayers must be offered in the *name of Jesus Christ*, since it is for *his sake only*, we can expect them to be heard or granted; for this is the condition and command, as proposed by Christ himself (John, xiv. 13): *Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that I will do, that the*

Father may be glorified in the Son. And that we can have no good hope of favour without an interest in his merits, he declares expressly again, in the next chapter (xv. 7, 8), *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you; for herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit: so shall ye be my disciples.* The manifest meaning of which texts is, that we are to ask nothing inconsistent with Christ's Spirit or holy commandments, and that it must be the needful graces of that good Spirit we must implore, by which alone, we can be enabled to bear much fruit, and consequently to glorify the Father who bestows these precious gifts upon us for the love of the Redeemer, and whereby alone assurance can be attained of our being truly his disciples.—What has now been said, may suffice as to what concerns the subject of our prayers.

The third division of my Discourse respects the time of our devotions: this, in general terms, is declared in the *text; we are to pray without ceasing;* but in referring to *time particularly,* the words will certainly bear a more limited sense than that in which they have been already considered. It is true, in St. Luke, xviii. 1, Christ intimates, *that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;* and, in Luke, xxiv. 53, the Apostles are represented as *continuing in the temple,*

praising and blessing God. In the text the Apostle exhorts *to pray without ceasing;* and in many other parts of Scripture, *continuance* in prayer is variously and forcibly enjoined; the general sense of which terms has already been fully explained. In regard to the more *particular* measure of this duty, all these expressions do only signify and enforce a constant attendance upon it *every day,* as our state and condition will admit, besides such other opportunities as the providence of God shall minister to us for the further performance of it; and not that we are to account ourselves thereby obliged to spend our *whole time* in prayer, to be always *on our knees.* Thus, when the Apostle (Rom. i. 9) asserts, that *without ceasing he makes mention of them always in his prayers,* the true sense of the expression is, whenever he is thus employed, he never omits petitioning for them. And when, in 1 Thess. iii. 10, he testifies his *zeal for them, by praying night and day exceedingly,* the meaning is, that he does not omit most earnestly to recommend them to God, both in his morning and evening devotions, and not that he continued in prayer whole days and nights for them.

But the due consideration of this part of the subject leads me naturally to inquire, what may be thought the general proportion that every Christian ought to observe, as to the

time of actual or daily prayer. Now, this must be determined by the opportunities our several callings will allow for it. It is very certain, that none laying any claim to Christian character, will be deficient in worshipping their Maker in private, every night and morning of their lives; and it is no less certain, that all who truly desire to *advance* in Christian piety, will be as regular and exemplary in the use of *family* prayer. As an excuse to avoid the latter, I know many plausible arguments have been offered on worldly principles, but they cannot be defended on religious and *Christian* grounds. They cannot stand the examination of a *pure conscience*; they will not abide the judgment of the *last day*.

There is nothing wanting but a heart devoted to God, to break through all these trifling excuses, and to set the weakness and the falseness of them in so glaring a light, as to prevent their being any longer hinderances to this essential and useful duty. In fact, the means to assist this bounden task, are in the power of every one: it is only to keep *good hours*, and to pray for a *disposition* to the work; for the common apology is, that such employment interferes with the common concerns of life. Rising, therefore, a few minutes earlier, for the purpose of this needful sacrifice, would remove *that* hinderance; the daily public

repetition of the Lord's Prayer only, in every family, would serve to keep up a sense of God and religion in it; the intention would be blessed by Him who knoweth the heart, and wonderful benefits be derived to individuals and society at large. But it is true, people must have a good degree of grace, a religious, grateful heart, and serious conviction of their wants and duty, before they can in earnest pursue this work.

In regard to God's more public worship, where opportunity is afforded, and leisure will permit, the service of the church *should never be neglected.* Those who prefer a partial service of their *own,* to the stated and regular worship of their Maker, may be sure there is something wanting in their *zeal.* There is such a palpable inconsistency in such conduct, that no argument can defend it; no one can entertain a pure veneration for God's public worship, who deserts it when possible to attend. However sincere in favourite and private modes of serving God, we must be uniform in our respect to the established regulation of his providence, or we shall incur the suspicion of hypocrisy, which will be dangerous to the general cause of Christianity; we shall appear to border upon *will* worship, to be carving out systems of our own, and endanger a contempt of the appointed solemn ordinances, through the dangerous influence of inconsiderate example. And if we

are blessed with humility and grace, to pay becoming deference to the *general* means the supreme Governor hath appointed for this public trial of our obedience to his wise dispensations, we cannot be too cautious to show our sense of these his benefits, by the most serious and respectful deportment in his house. We must convince each other, by decent and timely attendance there, that it is not matter of *form*, that urges our appearance, but a sense of His *undeserved mercies*, whose awful presence we are approaching; and that we consider it the highest honour and happiness of our lives, to be found assembled *where even two or three are gathered together in his name*; and in the solemnly *appointed* place, where he *hath chosen to be worshipped*. This will render our religion uniform, exemplary, and profitable to all the world; this will be to make *our light shine to the glory of the Father*, in imitation of his own bright example, which is not confined to sects or parties, but, like the sun, extends its *universal cheering* influence; *for there is neither speech or language, but his voice is heard among them*.

It is therefore, beyond all doubt, a matter of general and necessary duty in every truly pious Christian, upon all solemn occasions of prayer, to join the community in which we live, to supplicate God's mercy for ourselves, and all our

fellow-creatures. The laws of the realm, the canons of our church, and, above all, the word of God, require this duty from us. A few texts to prove it may not be unuseful. In the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, ver. 14, we read, that *all* Christians of that day *continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and the brethren.* In the second chapter, ver. 1, we find, *they were again all together in one place;* and in ver. 46, that *they continued daily with one accord in the temple* (no less than in private), *praising God.* In the 1st Cor. xi. 20, *the assembling of Christians together in one place to eat the Lord's supper,* denotes the general use of public worship; so that, if we live in a place where the prayers of the church are publicly read, and we are not unavoidably hindered from joining the service, there can no good excuse be given for *non*-attendance, however we may be tempted to think ourselves as well employed in some partial service, more suitable to our private judgment.

To conclude: In *our* church there can be no just exception made to the form or spirit of the service, because it is in a manner literally extracted from the *word of God,* which was written under the influence of the *Holy Spirit;* and consequently there cannot be a purer mode

of worship than what is drawn immediately from the fountain of evangelical instruction. The whole of our prayers are short selections from the writings of the Apostles; and a regular and judicious choice from the holy volume constitutes the remainder of this public sacrifice. It must be the grossest ignorance and prejudice that can object, that we pray not with the *Spirit*, because we make use of *forms*, since the words we use are the *positive language of inspiration;* God's *own* words, and consequently less liable to error than such as are the produce of man's most fertile fancy. In this excellent service, instead of indulging an enthusiastic hope for immediate inspiration of proper expression (which daily *experience* proves cannot with any propriety be admitted to take place in the exercise of many extempore prayers), we have only to pray for the unction of the Spirit to bless the application of God's own form of words. We must never presume to hope we can invent a *better* petition or supplication than the language of *Holy Writ* affords us; and, as our warrant for the safety of such service, Christ has left us a particular direction *how* to pray; he has transmitted to us a *form* of his own compiling; not only to be continually made use of by us, but also as a pattern after what manner we may perform acceptable service to our Maker, by expressions collected

from his Holy Word. In what way that form (short as it is) does happily direct us to compose all our prayers aright, will supply the subject of the next Lecture; for the present, let us humbly pray, that this feeble endeavour to glorify God's name, may have a good effect, that all our prayers and works may, through the mediation of Christ's atonement, prove instrumental to reconcile us to our Maker and to each other; to warm our hearts with heavenly affections, and to lower our too fond attachment to this world; to sweeten our tempers, and convey to us the true Christian spirit amidst all our differences, religious or civil, and to make us more ardently and universally desire the glory of God, and the peace and welfare, temporal and spiritual, both of ourselves and all our Christian brethren. And this we pray for Jesus Christ's sake, our only Lord and Saviour. To whom, &c.

LECTURE XXXVI.

FIRST LECTURE ON THE LORD'S PRAYER.

"Our Father which art in heaven."

JOHN, VII. 46.

Never man spake like this man.

IN reference to the holy Prayer upon which I am now about to discourse to you (my brethren), we may most truly apply the words spoken by the officer of the Jews concerning our blessed Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; *Never man spake like this man:* and the reason was manifest—because he taught as one *having authority, and not as the Scribes.* The persuasive influence of his divine Spirit recommended his words, and carried immediate conviction to the hearers. There was no leaven of worldly interest in any thing *he* said or did; whereas the instruction of the Scribes and Pharisees was deficient in spirituality; they were censured by Christ *himself,* as *corrupting the commandments of God through their traditions.*

Of all the blessed instructions for which we are indebted to our Saviour's love, there is no part which demands a more joyful portion of grateful praise, than his tender consideration in leaving us this happy form of prayer. All who firmly believe the Scriptures, and entertain an humble veneration for Christ's divine appointments, can never fail to be affected with a proper sense of the advantages to be derived from faithfully using every act his high wisdom thought necessary to enjoin us. To a truly Christian mind, it surely must afford the highest satisfaction to know, that the value of our petitions is built on that foundation, and sanctified by the form that Christ himself presented, and left us, as an unerring rule.

The first observation I shall make on this divine pattern of our addresses to Almighty God, will be in what relates to the general instruction it conveys; which contains four very material points: (1.) That we should make our prayers short and consistent, as being most suitable to the respect that is due to the wisdom and majesty of God, as likewise from deep consideration of our weakness and infirmities; for we are taught that we are not to expect to *be heard for our long prayers;* since, in this duty, God requires chiefly sincerity in our obedience to his commands, and needs not the addition of human eloquence to persuade him:

besides, that the consequence of tedious supplication naturally endangers our being led into unbecoming and ungodly wanderings.

The second point this form engages us to consider, is the important admonition of praying for others, no less than for ourselves, and that in our private as well as public prayers.

Thirdly, It warrants our applying for the necessary comforts of this life, though the very words which express this request imply at the same time (as will be shown in the proper place), that our main concern should be both in our prayers, as well as in our endeavours, for the things of a better world. Fourthly, it teaches us, that we should pray to GOD ONLY, and to him as our Father, through Jesus Christ, who hath obtained the adoption of children to us, according to the Apostle's assertion (Gal. iii. 26), *For ye are all children of God by faith in Jesus Christ.* And, lastly, we may collect from the sanction of this most holy form, that it is so far from being an unlawful thing to address God in a *set form* of words, nor in the least degree injurious to the needful influence of the Holy Spirit, that we have here our blessed Lord's own *example* for it, in *whom* (doubtless) *was the fulness of the Godhead bodily*; and in following whose wise appointments it is impossible to *err*. Nay, even under the law, we shall find that God was pleased in several cases to di-

rect the very words in which he chose to be addressed by his people, as any one may see who will consult the books of Deuteronomy and Numbers.

We will now proceed to consider the order and division of this holy form of prayer, which is no less remarkable for the accuracy and beauty of its composition, than for the universal subject of its contents.

It consists of three general heads: a preface or introduction, the petitions, and a doxology, or holy conclusion. The petitions are divided again into six distinct portions, upon each of which I shall paraphrase, or enlarge, in order to convince you how much useful knowledge and pious doctrine is contained in this comprehensive and concise form of words; and what inexhaustible matter it is capable of supplying for all our wants, both spiritual and temporal; in short, how abundantly it proves the truth of the text, *that never man spake as he spake.*

The preface or introduction to the Lord's Prayer is contained in this solemn invocation: OUR FATHER. The very *first* words convey a degree of comfort to every pious Christian, which must sink in value from any other mouth but that of Jesus Christ; for here we have the express authority of the Son of God himself, to adopt the language of his own divine Spirit, and to call *God our Father.* And there can be no cause to doubt, but, among the

other reasons hereafter to be mentioned, our blessed Master thus introduced his prayer, in order to remind us that all our hope of being heard, or of our petitions being accepted by God, is through virtue of that relation wherein we stand to him, *in* and *through* his Son Jesus Christ, according to his own positive declaration, in John, xiv. 6: *Jesus saith unto them, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.* And the conclusion that the Apostle draws, in Rom. viii. 17, lends additional consolation under this hope, that if *we are children, then are we heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ*; through whom we are authorized to say, *Abba, Father.* And our blessed Lord confirms the value of this address, in these further words of most cheering encouragement: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto* (saith Christ) *ye have asked nothing in my name.* Which words, and these following, give further sanction to the use of this Prayer: *Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. Hereafter ye shall ask in my name.*

The next words of the preface, WHO ART IN HEAVEN, point out to us a necessary distinction of this our heavenly Parent, in that they mark the residence of the Almighty. By exercising the mind in proper meditation upon the

HOLY ONE who inhabiteth eternity, and whose throne is seated in the heaven of heavens, our trust is naturally strengthened; for now we support ourselves with the important consolation, that we are not addressing earthly parents, who sometimes are hard towards their children, who will not give them what they ask, and often are not able to supply their wants, and through natural weakness cannot always tell what best will serve them, but consequently do either deny them what they ought to give, or grant their requests when it might have been more advisable to refuse them. Whereas the attributes of our *heavenly* Parent secure us from any of these bad consequences; since He who is all-merciful, all-powerful, and all-wise, can never be liable to any of these deficiencies. And this is an assurance founded on the following unerring testimonies: for the Prophet David (Psalm cxxiii. 1) addresses God in almost the very words I am explaining: *Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O Thou that dwellest in the heavens!* Again, his *power* is celebrated as follows (xcv. 3): *For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.* In Solomon's prayer, likewise, we find the Almighty thus distinguished (1 Kings, viii. 39), in a very particular address: *Then hear thou in heaven, thy dwelling-place; for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of the children of men.* And here (by the way) may be derived an im-

portant argument for the value and authority of forms in general; since our blessed Lord vouchsafed to open his own divine compilation in similar language to that so often recorded in the law and the prophets.

From the substance of this introduction we are taught to approach our Maker, not only with a blessed assurance, but also with becoming reverence, according to the wise Preacher's advice (Eccles. v. 2), *not to be rash with the mouth, nor to let the heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth, therefore our words should be few.* As he is our Father, we need not fear that he will ever fail to hear his children; for, as *a father pitieth his own children* (saith the Psalmist), *even so is the Lord merciful to them that fear him*, if they ask his favour as they ought to do. And as he is our heavenly Father, he can give us whatsoever we stand in need of; *for this is the confidence*, saith St. John (1 Ep. v. 14), *that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.*

Another circumstance that demands particular attention in this exalted title of our *heavenly* Father is this, that we are by no means to consider him as only so in heaven, as our mortal parents on earth: for God being infinite, is *every where present.* This expression, therefore, is only used to inspire us with respectful defer-

ence when we call on God in prayer, and not to lessen or confine our notion of his *omnipresence;* on the contrary, the Prophet Jeremiah (xxiii. 23, 24) gives us this just idea of the Most High, in the person of Jehovah speaking: *Am I God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? saith the Lord; Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.* But because heaven is the peculiar place where God is pleased to manifest the highest excellencies of his divine majesty and glory, and he is there attended by his holy angels and perfected servants, therefore heaven is justly considered as his court and throne, according to the Psalmist's declaration (xi. 4), *The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven:* and we most properly direct our prayers to God in that place, where our blessed Saviour sits to intercede with him for us, and where the blessed spirits attend upon him, and fall down before him, and worship him; *for heaven is his throne, and the earth is his footstool.*

The last observation I shall make on the introductory words of this Prayer, is to call your attention to the important reason of our saying OUR *Father*, instead of *my* Father, when we address the Lord in prayer; for, though it is most true that God is properly the Father of every one of us in particular, as well as of all man-

kind in general, yet, by duly weighing the end of thus invoking him, we are directed to enlarge the affections of our hearts, to check the advance of spiritual pride, and to increase our universal charity; for the pure sense of this peculiar manner of approaching God reminds us that there is no man so mean but what, through the merits of Christ's atonement and mediation, has an equal right to call God Father, as the greatest and most noble of all the human race. It teaches us, consequently, that we must look on all men as our brethren in the Lord, Christ having died for all, that all might come to the knowledge of the truth; and therefore every fellow-creature ought to be treated, loved, and prayed for, by us in this pure spirit. When we say, OUR *Father*, therefore, we are not to be understood as if we only called upon God for ourselves distinctly, but as acknowledging his universal title of Lord over all.

I have thought it necessary to speak thus particularly to you upon the subject of this short introduction, to convince you how much excellent thought may be excited in our minds, by properly considering the force and import of our blessed Master's words. And if people did but duly meditate upon the meaning of each petition, and make it a daily religious practice so to do, they would find this exercise of wonderful consequence in accustoming the heart to habits

of prayer, and in preserving them in a holy frame of mind. There is such comprehensive virtue in this short Prayer, that the composition exhibits something marvellous; for there is not a request or supplication of any cast, that can possibly be imagined, but must assume one of these petitions for its theme or groundwork. In those, therefore, who are over-partial to extempore prayer, it would be a most respectful, devout, and gratifying rule, always to introduce their religious addresses with some portion of this divine model. This would be to invoke the Holy Spirit with humble confidence in his own language, and to preclude any unfavourable supposition that they expect him to assist them with *better* terms or matter than their Saviour hath prescribed to them by the self-same Spirit.

But we of the established church, in which God of his gracious and wise providence hath appointed us to worship him, according to the laws and government under which he has pleased to cast our lot — we, I say, may be well content to adore his majesty, and supplicate his daily bounties, in the set forms of praise and prayer presented to us in our excellent Liturgy. Of the all-sufficient value of this our method we may rest well assured, it having been the indisputable usage of God's people of old, as may be proved by abundant passages from the law, the practice of their prophets, priests, and kings,

and the whole book of Psalms, which were forms of prayer and praise inspired by the Holy Ghost for the joint use of all the congregation. Further testimony might also be advanced, that the Jews at all times worshipped God in a set and precomposed form of prayer; and if this should be disputed, as not affording due authority for Christian practice, we may most securely rest our defence upon the practice of our blessed Lord himself, his holy Apostles, and the pious members of the first Christian church.

No one will deny that our Saviour continued always in communion with the Jewish church, and was no less zealous in attending their public devotions: he must consequently have joined in their general and *regular forms* of prayer, which were daily used in the temple, and Jewish congregations; and there is a very powerful reason to determine that he *did* so, because we do not hear to the *contrary*; for we may be very sure, had he not been most exemplary in this particular, his bitter enemies the Scribes and Pharisees, who were so strictly partial to the temple service, would doubtless have cast it in his teeth: but as nothing of this kind is to be found in the whole New Testament, but information of a quite different nature, we may therefore safely conclude, that our blessed Saviour was a constant attendant on the public

established service, and consequently joined in the stated forms of prayer. As to the Apostles and disciples, it is not in the least likely that they deviated from their Master's pattern, whilst he remained amongst them; and after their Lord's ascension, it is not only probable that they continued to join the national public worship, whenever opportunity presented, but it is plain that in their Christian assemblies they always used a precomposed, or *set* form of worship, which, without any tedious proof from learned authorities, may be at once collected from their own history in the Acts. As to the first point, it is indisputable, from the following record in Acts, iii. 1: *Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer.* Again, chap. xiii. ver. 14, 15, it is established by this assertion, that *they went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and sat down, and attended to the reading of the law and the prophets.* And in chap. xvii. ver. 2, it is said, that *Paul (as his manner was) went in unto them, and three sabbath-days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures.*

And that *set* forms of prayer were made use of by the Apostles and first Christians, might be shown by abundant unanswerable arguments, and the history of the early fathers of the church —but it will suffice for your conviction on this point, to assert that they did so most effectually

by joining in the use of the Lord's Prayer, the Psalms (many of which are actual addresses to God), and various other set forms of public devotion, which, according to learned testimony, are called in several of the ancient records, *common* prayers, *appointed* prayers, and *solemn* prayers.

But to return to the main subject: that Christ's Apostles and disciples joined in the Lord's Prayer, is abundantly evident, from our Saviour's express *command;* for, though it may be said that our blessed Master, in one place (St. Matt. vi. 9), seems to deliver this Prayer only *as* a *pattern* by which to model our other prayers, where he says, *After this manner pray*, &c.; yet, in another place (Luke, xi. 2), when his disciples positively asked him to *teach them how to pray*, he expressly bids them in the very words of this Prayer, *When ye pray say, Our Father*, &c. &c. Now, as no one can entertain so low an opinion of St. John, or our Lord's disciples, as to think they were wholly ignorant how to pray, it is plain that they could mean nothing else by their request, but that Christ would give them a peculiar form, as a *sign* of their belonging to *him;* according as John's disciples were distinguished by the prayer *he* made for *them*, and as was the custom of the Jewish doctors, who always taught the disciples a particular *form* to add to their *own*, so

that the unavoidable conclusion is, that either our Saviour instructed them to use this form of words, or else he did not answer the design of their request to him.

But the safest way to avoid being misled by any critical disputes upon the meaning of original words, is to receive the injunction in both the senses, as before advised; viz. to make it the rule or pattern as to the matter and manner of all our prayers, and to use it as a form in honour of our Lord; for, as it was formed by our glorious Advocate, who knew both his Father's infinite sufficieney, and our essential wants, we may be assured it contains every thing fit for us to ask of God his Father to bestow. And for which reason the wisdom of our church has justly appoined it to be added to all her holy forms and offices, to make up their defects, and to recommend them to our heavenly Father; who, if he cannot deny us when we apply to him properly in his Son's name, will much less do so, when we address him in his *words likewise.*

Further, from becoming reverence to the divine Author of this Prayer, and a full sense of its efficacy, the Church directs that the congregation shall always join the minister in an audible voice, whenever this Prayer is said, partly for this good reason, that people ignorantly brought up may the sooner learn it, and be supplied with words of unexceptionable expres-

sion to recommend them to the favour of the Almighty, and partly to signify how boldly all Christians may approach the Father, when they address him in his Son's words.

And there is an humble and valuable design even in the frequent repetition of this Prayer (to which many, from a spirit of vain refinement and busy innovation, are too ready to except); since by such practice, at *judicious* distances in the service, this manifest advantage is afforded us, that if, through natural infirmity, we have not put up our petitions in it with sufficient warmth and spiritual devotion *before*, we may make some amends by renewing our petitions with redoubled earnestness.

In discoursing on the introductory words of this Prayer, I have judged it no unsuitable opportunity to give you a short history and defence of set forms in *general*, as supported by the practice of *Christ* and his *Apostles*, the testimony of *Scripture*, and the usage of the earliest Christian times.

Another matchless character of this holy Prayer is, that as, by its *shortness*, it is easily retained in memory, so, by the purity and plainness of its expressions, the affections and understanding may more easily keep pace with its petitions, and thus render the use of it of singular benefit to the unlearned. Though (as a pious Prelate of our church observes on this

very subject) it is a great unhappiness where people cannot read, yet God forbid that should ever hinder them from *praying;* so, in the constant application of this single Prayer, a considerable remedy is at hand for this much-to-be-lamented neglect of education. *Whoever* (says the same pious divine) *has sense to know that he is a sinner, and that he wants God's help, is bound to pray as well as he can;* and, by this gracious provision of his Saviour, he is supplied at once with such a form of prayer, as cannot fail to answer every purpose for which he possibly can have occasion to address his Maker. Of this I hope to be able most fully to convince you, in the following explanation of each particular petition. If these portions of the Prayer are offered up with humility and sincerity, God, who knoweth the heart, and what is best for us, much better than we do ourselves, will most assuredly hear and grant any prayer and supplication presented in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ. If, therefore, all ranks of people would conform to the pious practice of most seriously employing this Prayer, both *morning* and *evening*, as well in public with their families, as in private for themselves, there is every reason to believe, upon the principle of evangelical admonition and assurance, that they would escape a variety of accidents, and obtain more blessings than

they meet with in their journey through this vale of sorrow and uncertainty; it being doubtless owing to *neglect of prayer* to God, and a becoming dependence on his favour and protection, that we see such an increase of wickedness and misfortune among *all orders of people.* And that we may all become thoroughly sensible of the great benefit and blessing of having such an inestimable legacy left us, as this heavenly Prayer holds out, and that we may never fail to use it according to the gracious purpose of the divine Testator, let us now unite to glorify God's holy name for this great and undeserved privilege of laying our wants before him, in a form so highly qualified by the wisdom of his Holy Spirit, and the tender love of his dear Son, our Lord; in whose blessed *name,* as we begun this feeble effort of magnifying his goodness to us, so by his grace we will *conclude* it, in those very *words,* which, out of compassion to our infirmities, he hath taught and commanded us at all times, when we call upon him, to employ, and say, Our Father, &c.

LECTURE XXXVII.

THE SECOND ON THE LORD'S PRAYER.

FIRST PETITION.

PSALM XCIX. 3.

They shall give thanks unto thy name, which is great, wonderful, and holy.

IN my former Lecture I informed you (my brethren), that the Lord's Prayer consisted of six petitions. It may be useful, for the fuller explanation of the order and design of this holy form of words, to acquaint you, that this division will admit of a still further and necessary distinction; viz. that the three first petitions relate more immediately to the honour and glory of God, and therefore may, perhaps, be more properly styled pious wishes, than positive petitions; whereas the three last do particularly concern our own absolute wants.

The first of these petitions, or expressions of pious desire, with which this divine prayer presents us, is contained in these words: HAL-

LOWED BE THY NAME. In the progress of these labours for the instruction and improvement of all who are desirous to be acquainted with the first principles of the religion they profess, I have judged it essentially conducive to that end, that you should have a clear understanding of any terms of difficult interpretation, that may occasionally present themselves; because ignorance of the meaning of one word may sometimes cause such obscurity in the understanding of a whole sentence, as to leave the notion of any particular duty very imperfect, should not the sense of the principal word be rendered perfectly familiar to the hearer and reader. For which reason, before I have proceeded to the explanation of any doctrine, I have generally thought proper to clear the way, by rendering the terms intelligible in which it is conveyed: I shall employ the same method in the case before us.—To HALLOW any thing, signifies to pay becoming reverence or honour to it, to consider or treat a thing or person as being HOLY: this is the true meaning of the word in the Saxon language, whence it is taken, and as it is always applied in Scripture. Thus, in Levit. xxii. 32, the Lord delivers this command: *I will be* HALLOWED; that is, I will be treated according to my *holiness*. Again, *I am the Lord who* HALLOW *you*, that is, by whom ye are made *holy*. In Jer. xvii. 22, it

is applied to the *sabbath-day*; as it is also in the 20th chapter of Exodus, where the express commandment respecting that day is recorded; HALLOW *ye the sabbath-day*; HALLOW *my sabbaths, and they shall be a sign between me and you. The Lord blessed the sabbath-day, and* HALLOWED *it*; that is, appointed it to be kept *holy*. By *hallowing* God's name, you see, we understand the considering it in the most *holy light*, and that we are to pay all respect and veneration to it. A petition of this import deservedly requires the first place in a Prayer composed for the use of weak and needy creatures, because it supplies a necessary *preparation* of the mind, to make such humble applications as their dependent state requires.

In this address we separate the name of God to the holy use of prayer alone; and the more we indulge our meditation on the authority, power, and reverence due to this most holy name, the better we shall be qualified to present consistent and acceptable petitions to the throne of grace, since a previous contemplation of the great and awful Being in whose presence we are now appearing, should give us pause, and will serve to check all hasty and irreverent approach to him in our words or actions.

Our blessed Saviour began his Prayer with this very petition or desire, in order to direct us

that God's glory ought to be the first object of our prayers, as well as the principal end of all our actions; we may therefore justly paraphrase this first expression in the sublime language of the holy Psalmist, and say, *O Lord our Governor, how excellent is thy name in all the world, thou that hast set thy glory above the heavens!* (Psa. viii. 1.) Correspondent to which address is the elevated description of Isaiah, in his vision of God's glory (vi. 3): *And one cried, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.* Again, in the 12th chapter and 4th verse, the Prophet pays equal honour to the Lord Jehovah in these words of solemn invocation: *Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted.* And the Apostle St. Paul unites in recommending the same precaution to all professing a dependence on the Supreme Being; (1 Cor. x. 31), *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the* GLORY *of God.* Consequently, when we pray to him, we must endeavour to be deeply impressed with the majesty of his NAME, so as to guard us from all unworthy designs of self-importance or private gratifications; but, on the contrary, to enable us to offer pure and becoming service to the Lord.

As, therefore, it is incumbent upon us to begin our prayer with such a sense of the

divine presence, and the majesty of God's name, as these words imply, we must recollect at the same time, that this desire is offered in general terms, not for ourselves only, but for all God's servants, according to the reason explained to you in the former Lecture, why we say OUR Father, and not MY Father.

The further explanation of this passage will admit of the following comment or enlarging on the original words: We here pray, that all men may live in the true fear of the Lord, performing that honour to the divine Majesty that their subjection to him calls for—by ordering their lives according to the doctrine and example of his Son, Jesus Christ, and as becomes the children of so holy a Father, that others, being influenced by our devout and humble conduct in the article of solemn prayer, may be also led *to glorify their Father who is in heaven*, building sure hopes on this most gracious promise of the Almighty Lord himself, that *whoso giveth* HIM *thanks and praise, him will God honour;* or, in the religious language of a most pious Prelate * of our own Church, whose authority I ever quote with profit and delight, we may suppose the words, HALLOWED BE THY NAME, to import thus much: "Let us ever remember, O Lord God, that thou art our great Creator, our absolute Lord,

* Wilson, Bishop of Sodor and Man.

our merciful Saviour, and our all-seeing Judge. May we stand in awe of thine almighty power, thy universal providence, and thy rigid justice; may we love thy boundless goodness, and be always thankful for thine innumerable benefits; may we trust thy truth and wisdom, and call upon thy name as long as we live!"

We will now proceed to consider what is meant by the name of God, as it is here employed. It intimates, most clearly, a strict regard to the precept of the third commandment, that we cannot be too cautious, lest, even in prayer, we take this *holy name in vain;* for, by the NAME of God, is understood God HIMSELF, and whatsoever does in any wise relate to him. The Deity declares thus much in Exod. vi. 3, *And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the* NAME *of God Almighty.* It is also said (xxxiv. 5, 6), that *the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with Moses; and, because it was not possible for man* (as man) *to see his face, and live, therefore he proclaimed the* NAME *of the Lord, even the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth—and thus* (as David observes) *has God magnified his* NAME *and his word above all things.*

It may seem, at first sight, strange to some, that we should be liable to any danger of taking *God's name in vain,* when busied in so serious

an employment as solemn prayer to him; but we shall soon be ready to alter our opinion, upon due consideration of the nature and end of prayer, and the manifold infirmities to which our human nature is subject. Alas! we are too apt to incur the breach of this commandment, in an essential measure, both in the public and private worship of our Maker. Let any one but seriously examine his own *heart*, and he must confess, with pious sorrow, that it is frequently his own misfortune, if not his fault. Now, this transgression may be committed several ways; for, when we weigh the dignity of God's most holy NAME, by the scriptural evidence just now delivered, and the manifold deficiencies of our very best services, we must condemn ourselves as guilty, whenever we wilfully abuse the sacred privilege of calling upon him, in what degree or shape soever it be done; that is, when we apply to him for things that are quite incompatible with the spirit of pure religion for us to possess; when we offer him the sacrifice of our lips, without the tribute of our hearts; when we do not check those wanderings in prayer, or evil fancies, to which we are all more or less exposed, but, on the contrary, pursue them to the total neglect of what we are about; when we approach the courts of the Lord's house, or solicit him in our closets, merely for fair appearance, or from an acquired habit, confessing the *form of godliness*,

but denying the power of it; when, however solemn our words, or fervent our manner, our petitions are wanting in the essential quality to recommend them, viz. an humble but firm faith in HIM who is able to perform.

In all these and such-like instances we do most assuredly *take God's name in vain*, although the *outward* purpose of the act supposes a very different design.

Indeed, it is to this very error our blessed Lord alludes, when he says, *Whatsoever ye ask in prayer,* BELIEVING, *ye shall receive it:* and St. James, after magnifying the power of faith to qualify our prayers, attributes the inefficacy of all our petitions to the slender portion of this Christian grace; *for the effectual prayer of a righteous man* (saith he) *availeth much, and the prayer of faith shall save the sick,* for whom we pray; but then he acquaints us, that *we must ask in* FAITH, *not wavering.*

In speaking further to the sacred signification of God's NAME, it may supply you with much valuable instruction, to be shown in how many places it is applied in Scripture to denote the Deity himself, and all his glorious works. —It is observable, in 1 Kings, v. 5, that when Solomon confers with King Hiram on his design of building the temple of the Lord, he expresses himself thus: *And, behold, I purpose to build a house unto the* NAME *of the Lord my*

God; by which he denotes the worship and service due to God. In abundant passages of the Psalms the *name* of God is used to represent God himself: the following will be sufficient. In Ps. xx. 1, *The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the* NAME *of the God of Jacob defend thee.* (lxi. 5), *For thou, O Lord, hast heard my desires, and hast given an heritage unto those that fear thy* NAME.

In short, to speak in God's NAME, or to call upon it, signifies the very same thing as to address the Deity HIMSELF, which has already been abundantly proved from the manner of speaking employed in Holy Scripture, and of which I will afford you some few more testimonies, before I conclude my purposed illustration of the words which compose the *first* petition.

Under this single term, God's NAME, is comprehended whatever can contribute to render his nature and will more level to our present confined capacities: it is not only used to express his general titles, as we read in Exodus, iii. 13, 14, where, when Moses consulted the Almighty, for a significant reply to the people who might ask, *What is his* NAME? God said, I AM THAT I AM; but it is used, also, as a sufficient declaration of the attributes or perfections of the Deity: and this is evident from God's speech to his servant Moses, upon his desiring him to manifest his glory to him (Exod. xxxiii.18,

19): *And God said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee;* which act he assures him was as completely fulfilled as possible by proclaiming his NAME before him. Nay, even his will and purpose upon so very momentous a point as the SALVATION of MANKIND by CHRIST, is also included by this expression in the words of Christ himself, John, xvii. 5, 6, which shows the sacred import of his holy name: *And now, Father, glorify thou me with thine own self; for I have manifested thy* NAME *unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world.* By his NAME is understood his *help* and assistance, as in 1 Sam. xvii. 45, *Thou camest to me with sword and spear, but I come unto thee in the* NAME *of the Lord of hosts;* whereby David shows the virtue that dependence on that NAME supplies. The opening of the 76th Psalm manifestly shows that God's honour, renown, and glory, are all implied under this single word: *In Jewry is God known, his* NAME *is great in Israel.*

Again, his grace, love, and mercy to sinners in sending Christ to save them, is further set forth under this particular title, John, xvii. 26: *And I have declared unto them thy* NAME, *and will declare it.*

Secondly. By the NAME of God is not only implied every particular concerning the eternal Father, as his wisdom, power, and goodness, whether displayed in the work of creation, or provi-

dence; but it is also employed to convey to us the different offices and perfections of God the SON, the second Person in the adorable Trinity: since by the same expression, as we find it in Isaiah, ix. 6, it is said, *His* NAME *shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.* And the angel of God, in St. Matthew, i. 23, unites in the same application of it, when he says, that *a virgin shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call his* NAME EMMANUEL, *which, being interpreted, is, God with us.* Even the preaching Christ's authority and commission (or professing the Gospel), and his advancement above all principalities and powers, to the highest degree of glory, honour, majesty, and dominion, are all included under the application of his NAME: for, as our Lord asserts (Matt. vii. 22), *Many will say to him in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy* NAME, *and in thy* NAME *cast out devils, and in thy* NAME *done many wonderful works?* It is also asserted, that his followers shall be hated for his NAME'S sake, and that they who forsake the choicest comforts of this life for his NAME'S *sake, shall inherit eternal life.* And as to the last-mentioned instance, in which this one word comprises such a combination of his divine perfections; it is proved by Phil. ii. 9, that *at the* NAME *of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under*

the earth. For, as the Apostle observes to the same effect, in Eph. i. 21, *he hath given him a* NAME, *far above all principalities, and powers, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come.*

Having now, my brethren, most fully manifested to you, by express authority of Scripture, that, by calling on the NAME of God and Christ, we in every essential and solemn sense do apply ourselves immediately to the divine Persons of the Godhead, it behoves us ever to keep in mind what a serious meaning is affixed to this *first* petition in our blessed Master's Prayer, HALLOWED BE THY NAME. We can be no longer at a loss for reasons why the use of that holy name should have every possible veneration paid it. And if we pray for grace to cultivate such a religious impression of these truths upon our minds, as doubtless our Lord intended his true disciples should possess, we need be under no fear of ever taking his holy name in vain, when we address him in our forms of daily worship, whether in the congregation or in private.

To give you a true notion of this most necessary and useful sense of the petition, has been my present humble design: may God bless the endeavour, as a means of qualifying every supplication we make unto HIM, to the praise

and glory of his most holy NAME, and for the sake, and through the merits of his dear Son Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed all might, majesty, and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.

LECTURE XXXVIII.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.—SECOND PETITION.

"*Thy kingdom come.*"

LUKE, XVII. 20, 21.

The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

THE request contained in this second petition of our Lord's Prayer is of all others the most important, both to our present and eternal welfare. In praying that GOD'S KINGDOM MAY COME, is implied a faithful desire that we may be made *children* of that kingdom; and as no one can offer this petition to any saving purpose, who is not sincere as to the request, so no sincerity can be expected, unless we are fully acquainted with the true sense of the petition. It may afford useful instruction to enlarge upon these words, that, by impressing your minds with the many serious articles they comprehend, the desires of the heart may accompany the sacrifice of the lips; and by thus praying with the

understanding we may offer a more acceptable service to Almighty God than barely repeating a form of words (though originally dictated even by the Holy Spirit) could otherwise prove to him.

That you may have a thorough knowledge how truly we style this Prayer in general a *most comprehensive form of words*, I will proceed to show you how much religious information is included in, and may be collected from, this particular part of it. And, first, by declaring ourselves interested in the *coming of God's kingdom*, we plainly acknowledge him to be a King. Now, it may assist our becoming worship of him as such, to consider in how many respects this title does most truly belong to him. God is evidently a King, in these essential characters following: 1. In regard to *all the world*, which, as it was created by his power, and as he rules and supports it by his providence, so the holy Psalmist (xcv. 3, 4, 5) does thus most justly represent his most awful majesty—*For the Lord is a great God, and a great* KING *above all gods: in his hands are all the corners of the earth, and the strength of the hills is his also: the sea is his, and he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.* Again (xcvii. 1), *The Lord is King; the earth may be glad thereof, yea, the multitude of the isles may be glad thereof.*

Secondly, he is also entitled to the *kingly*

character, in relation to his church and people: for these he governs and conducts, both by his word and Holy Spirit, with respect to which dominion Christ speaks in Mark, i. 15, when, preaching the Gospel or glad tidings of the kingdom of God, he exhorts his hearers to consider that the time was fulfilled, and that the KINGDOM *of God was at hand,* and therefore it behoved them to *repent and believe the Gospel,* that is, the blessed news he was sent to convey to them.

Thirdly, The title of kingly majesty is peculiarly applicable to God, with respect to his *heavenly kingdom;* that seat of bliss ineffable, where he actually reigns over all his holy angels with glory now, and in which blessed region he will hereafter continue to rule over all his perfected saints and servants to all eternity. And it is of God's rule over this kingdom above, that our blessed Master speaks in Matt. v. 10, when he pronounces as one proof of the blessed state of those who suffer in a righteous cause, that *theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* And in the 20th verse he alludes to the very same place, when he declares, that *except our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, we cannot possibly enter into that heavenly kingdom.* And to convey some further notion to us of the glorious nature of that holy place, he adds this splendid de-

scription of it, in Matt. xiii. 43: that *the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of his Father. This is that kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world, for all who, striving to enter into its strait gate,* shall be called by the King of it to approach towards his right hand, and, being found prepared for this high honour, shall be styled *the blessed of the Father.*

By considering God's universal dominion in these three points of view, we acknowledge him to be a *King,* in the fullest sense of the word; and the scriptural testimonies so often selected, do sufficiently establish the glory of his kingdom, both in heaven and earth. It was very proper the mind should be prepared by a due sense of the majesty of the divine PERSON, before we extend our inquiries as to the different acceptations in which *his kingdom* may be received, and to the true meaning of wishing or praying *that God's kingdom may come.*

Now, these words will admit both of a general and a limited interpretation: the first, as it concerns all mankind; the second, as it relates more immediately to *ourselves.* In the enlarged sense of the petition, we pray that all men may both more clearly know, and more worthily obey, the true and only God (the Lord of heaven and earth), than, from common observa-

tion and sad experience, we have reason to fear is the steady practice of what we call the *world*. This is a charitable wish, that should prepare and qualify every prayer to God; for it is highly desirable, that all nations whom God has made, should come to the knowledge of His truth, whose majesty is described in such sublime and awful terms as these: *Thus saith God, the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out, he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein.* (Isaiah, xlii. 5.) Every pious Christian, I say, cannot fail to wish, that the world should own the rule of such a mighty and gracious Benefactor, and come to the knowledge of Him, who is further set forth in this declaration of ver. 6: *I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the gentiles:* (7.) *To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoner from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house.* I need hardly inform you, my brethren, that this is spoken of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and as his true disciples, who have experienced the benefit of the light ourselves, how can we avoid to pray most earnestly that it may be spread abroad in all the world, or, in other words, that "*God's*

"*kingdom may come,*" may extend still more and more, to the glory of his name, and to salvation of our fellow-creatures; *to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide their feet in the way of peace* (Luke, i. 79); *to turn them from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by the faith that is in Jesus Christ.* (Acts, xxvi. 18.)

2. And, to this good end, these words, "*thy "kingdom come,*" contain the further wish, that it would please God to enlarge the borders of his church, and bring all nations within the pale of it, according to his own most gracious promise to his beloved Son, as mentioned in Psalm ii. 8, *Desire of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession.* This, then, we desire in his name for all mankind; and thus is it expressed in the inspired language of the prophet Micah (iv. 8), where the *kingdom* of God is represented by the *church* of God: *And thou, O tower of thy flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion, even the* KINGDOM, *to the daughter of Jerusalem.* In the words, therefore, of this petition, we humbly implore God to fulfil his promise mentioned in Jeremiah, xxxi. 33, 34: *That all may know him, from the*

least to the greatest, and that he will put his law in their inward parts, and write it on their hearts; that he will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sins no more; in short, *that he will be their King and God, and that they may be his people:* that, wherever his church and kingdom are already established, he would, by the powerful influence of his grace, proceed still more and more to destroy the power of sin and the dominion of Satan, and to implant the fear and love of his holy *name* in the hearts of all his servants; that all nations may be duly taught to seek after *the kingdom of God and his righteousness, being baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost* (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20); that so, by his Spirit directing and strengthening them, *to observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded,* they may experience the presence of the *King* among them, *even to the end of the world, until all shall meet hereafter in his eternal kingdom in heaven;* or, as the voice of prophecy and revelation expresses it, *until the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ, and that he shall reign for ever and ever.* And this leads to the

Third respect in which we pray God's KINGDOM MAY COME; that is to say, that his eternal kingdom, according to the words of the Apostle (Tit. i. 2), may be enlarged, *in hope*

of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, did promise before the world began; and that the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, may appear unto all men, teaching them, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ (Tit. ii. 11, 12, 13); that so, the fulness of his saints being accomplished, and the blessed time come, we may all be translated into his *heavenly kingdom:* and thus all other powers and dominions being done away, God alone shall be exalted in his holy place, and rule for ever over all his faithful servants.

Thus much may suffice to be delivered to you at this time, on the general desire contained in this petition of, "THY KINGDOM COME," and as it is connected with the glory of God's *universal* kingdom. But there is another sense in which these words may as justly be received, which intimates a more *particular* relation, and concerns us individually in a most essential degree indeed, and that is, as this kingdom is expressly represented in the text—*For, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.* That this is the most important light in which we can receive these words, is manifest past all dispute, because it is our blessed Saviour's positive and immediate answer to

the inquiry, *when the kingdom of God should come?* (Luke, xvii. 20)—a question, relating plainly to a *different* state of God's kingdom, than that by which the King himself describes it, and which supposes at the same time that it should be attended with signs of *outward pomp*, considering it as a dispensation of such vast importance to mankind. But our blessed Lord's reply is peculiarly descriptive of the real character of his kingdom, *which doth not come with observation*, that is, with vain show or noisy boastings, but demonstrates its power in every real member of the kingdom, in each particular Christian temple of the body, *by the fruits of peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, whose temples we are, as long as we do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption.* When, therefore, we beseech our heavenly Father, that "HIS KINGDOM MAY COME," we must ever keep in mind how closely we are interested in this petition; for, when viewed in this light, we are supposed to pray, that we may receive the kingdom of *God's grace within us.* It is of the greatest moment, therefore, that we should first weigh the nature of this kingdom, and, secondly, inform ourselves in what manner and by what means it may be established inwardly in our hearts: the illustration of which particulars will supply abundant matter for our contemplation at this

time.—The state of this kingdom, then, as applicable to our own persons, is that needful share of divine grace in the soul, which must gradually increase, notwithstanding its small appearance at first, in order that we may be prepared for God's kingdom of glory. That this is the kingdom we all stand in need of, is fully proved by Christ's own words in Matt. iii. 31: *Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard-seed, which, though among the least of all the seeds, yet, when grown, it is the greatest among the herbs, and becometh such a tree, that the birds of the air may lodge in the branches of it.* As the state of the church, under the Gospel, or the kingdom of the Messiah, wherein we have so many great and spiritual blessings and privileges bestowed upon us, is our state of *trial* for a place of eternal happiness and glory; *as here we have no continuing city, but do seek one to come*; so, the foundation of *this* kingdom must be laid here, or we shall never attain unto the building of God, *unto the house not made with hands.* (2 Cor. v. 1.) For which reason, the Apostle styles all who have the seeds of this kingdom sown in their hearts, *God's own husbandry and God's building.* (1 Cor. iii. 9.) And according to this representation of our condition, our blessed Lord, in the parable of the sower (Matt. xiii.

28), describes the children of this kingdom by the *good seed*, and assures us, that he himself, the Son of man, is *he* that *soweth that good seed.*

1. St. Paul, in confirmation of the same truth, informs us in Rom. xiv. 17, in what this kingdom expressly consists, what it is not, and what it is: *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink;* i. e. it does not consist of things indifferent in themselves, or of any of the comforts and external advantages of this temporal world; but it is of a pure, spiritual nature, *it is righteousness and joy, and peace in the Holy Ghost.* From all these passages, then, it is very evident, that to pray that "GOD'S KINGDOM "MAY COME," and to pray for his grace, are one and the same thing. Now, when we reflect how we are encompassed with infirmities and sin, how the carnal desire of the body clogs and weighs down the soul, we must all readily confess how very expedient it is, that this kingdom should *be formed in us*, in order to become heirs of the kingdom which Christ hath promised, and to have an entrance ministered into his everlasting rest. We must be content now (if the Lord sees fit) *to be his companions in tribulation, and humble brethren of the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.* (Rev. i. 9.) Being convinced that, without God's help, we can do nothing truly acceptable to

him, or worthy a place in his glorified kingdom, it is surely both our duty and our interest, always to put up this petition in the true spirit of Christian meekness, and to implore him continually (for *Christ's sake)* so to establish the spiritual kingdom in our hearts, that we may bring forth the fruits of holy living, to the honour and praise of his name here, and by which we shall be qualified for admission into that blessed state of endless happiness, prepared for all who love him, and use the gracious means he has appointed to purify their souls.

The *last* particular that comes under our observation relative to these words is,

2. How we may assure ourselves of any interest in this kingdom now, or of any *hope* of it hereafter—how we are to pray, that the *effects* of this kingdom may come; or, in other words, by what *manner* and *means* we may obtain them.

Our blessed Saviour tells us (Matt. xi. 12), that the kingdom of heaven *suffereth violence, and that the violent take it by force.* Hence it is evident, that we cannot be too active and diligent in our endeavours after the qualifications that are absolutely needful to prepare us for it: and agreeable to this information, he exhorts us, in another place, to *strive to enter in at the strait gate;* but at the same time he adds an observation that has something rather dis-

couraging in its sound, viz. *that many shall seek to enter in, yet they shall not be able;* and to the same effect is his declaration in John, vii. 34, that *they should seek him, but not find him; and that where he was they should not come* (viii. 21); and that for this natural cause, because they should die in their sins. Now, as the explanation of this passage immediately concerns the point we are upon, I will endeavour to remove what may at first sight appear *alarming* in it, by showing briefly in what *only* this difficulty can consist. They who seek, but are not able to secure, the blessed object held out to them, can signify no more than that they do not employ the PROPER MEANS of succeeding. They are such as neither *work out their salvation with fear and trembling;* that is, with the concern and caution the task requires; nor yet do they work with the right instrument. And when we consider the matter seriously, there can be no more wonder that people who seek in so improper a manner, should fail of obtaining eternal life, than that they should fall short of accomplishing any other design which they pursue by measures not calculated for securing the particular end in view; and thus, in *both* cases, people may be continually seeking, *but in vain.* If, therefore, we would seek the kingdom of God in earnest, we must seek it in the only way by which it can be found; we must employ

the means that Christ has appointed, and then we need not fear but success will follow. We must pray that God's Holy Spirit may take possession of the heart, *there* to set up his kingdom, and reign over all our corruptions, that so we may be truly and entirely his subjects. Never was any one disappointed of present peace and joyful hope, who sincerely and humbly strove for this means.

The outward means are of Christ's own appointment: 1. the use of the *sacraments*, to which he has promised the assistance of his Spirit; and, 2. the Holy Scriptures, which are a rule for us to walk by, plain *directions in writing*, to which likewise he has promised a light to *open*, that is, help our understanding in the reading and studying his word. But this very promise implies that we *must read and study*; we must *use* our endeavours, or God cannot be said to help our endeavours. God has graciously appointed *other* helps. He has provided us a church, and an order of men to teach, and assist those to understand the Scripture, who, from want of education, cannot read and study them: their office also is to administer the sacraments to the members of that church. The reason, therefore, that many do not experience *this kingdom within them*, is, because they seek it by a light that is *fallible*, by the mere light of their own natural understanding; for,

without the influence and light of the Spirit of God, the *other* light *will be but darkness, because the natural man cannot know the things of the Spirit of God,* which being *spiritually discerned,* we must consequently partake of the Holy Spirit to perceive them. The operation of the blessed Spirit on our minds is the cause of all the good that is wrought in us; for the grace of God, which *justifies,* or renders us *acceptable* to him (through Jesus Christ), is not only necessary for the remission of past sins, but does also procure us strength to resist sin for the future. Neither is this grace given us to do those works more easily, which we could otherwise have done by our own free will, though with very great difficulty; for, concerning all Christian virtues or fruits of holiness, the Lord does not say, that *without me* ye shall do them with difficulty; but *these* are his words—*Without me ye can do nothing;* that is, nothing tending to justification or acceptance with God.

Human reason is only good to *lead* us to *revelation;* it has no virtue in *itself* to *save;* but still it is *one gift* of God, and the subject whereupon his blessed Spirit works, and subdues it to himself.

The seed of *regeneration* is sown in the sacrament of baptism. We are then baptized, or washed mystically, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, from

the infection of that impurity naturally derived to us by a *corrupt inheritance.* By virtue of Christ's ordinance, the spiritual effects of the sacrament are conveyed to the soul of the person admitted to it: this must be so, or, in the *case of infants,* it would not avail for their *salvation.* As the subject advances in reason and understanding, he becomes accountable for every breach of the covenant he has entered into. In proportion to the *use* or *abuse* of the *further* means of grace, this good seed takes root and grows, or is choked and withers away. Thus you have a short view of the method and means whereby the *kingdom of God* is obtained by *infants;* or, as our Church expresses it, of their being *made children of grace* (or divine favour) *and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven:* for our Saviour assures us, that *except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.*

Respecting persons baptized at riper years, or those who have fallen from grace, God, in his mercy to his creatures, and for the sake of Christ's atonement and satisfaction for the depravity of a fallen nature, has most graciously appointed other means of establishing his kingdom in their hearts; and these are, *repentance* and *faith.* The first was the necessary condition on which any were invited even to John's baptism; and to this the Apostles added faith in

our Lord Jesus Christ, as the only means that could qualify Christians to receive any benefit by this sacrament, supposing them of age to make profession for themselves: and in the case of past offences, these two terms, accompanied by humble prayer, are the means *still* held out to us in the Gospel, whereby alone we can recover an interest in Christ's blood, and petition God with any hopes that his KINGDOM MAY COME. And this is the faith, my brethren, we must continually pray that God would increase in all our souls, viz. to believe, that, respecting our repentance, nothing we can do, even by the assistance of the Holy Spirit (which is necessary to qualify every good endeavour and effect), is able to pay off our former debts, or cancel past transgressions, but the satisfaction made to God for sin by Jesus Christ in the design of his mercy, before the world was made, and now actually performed in God's appointed time, by the death and sufferings of this immaculate and blessed Saviour. It is the power and effect of this sacrifice that justifies us (upon our repentance and faith) from all our sins; and it is the influence of Christ's Spirit in our hearts (procured to us by his merits), that purifies and renders us acceptable to God. As to the *manner* of the *operation* of God's good Spirit upon the human mind, as it neither concerns this subject,

nor any person to be curious in determining it, we shall do well to be content with Christ's description of it: *As the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth, so are all those that are born of the Spirit.* And, therefore, when once we are convinced, that we can do nothing purely good of ourselves, and that every exertion towards holiness proceeds from a *love of God*—from a sense of our duty to him—from humble obedience to his commands, and not to gratify our own affections, or exalt us in the esteem of men; when we act towards each other from gratitude to our Maker, helping our fellow-creatures for his sake, and *loving him, because he first loved us;* when all the good we receive from the Creator, or do for the creature, is ascribed to his glory, inasmuch as such conduct cannot be derived from principles strictly selfish, we may humbly assure ourselves, they are the *fruits of the Spirit,* and that we are so far *born again of God.*

Here, then, is another short statement, both of the assurance of our hope, and of the means by which we may recover a title to God's kingdom of grace within us, and a glorious inheritance above, even after we have fallen off *through the corruption that is in the*

flesh through lust, provided always, that we apply these means with sincerity. The preparation to prevail on God to pour down this blessing upon us is frequently to meditate on the spiritual virtue of his own gracious *form of words*, to sit loose from the pleasures and temptations of this life, and to resign *our* will *to God's will, in all things*. This last principle is of the utmost importance in our Christian warfare; and as it leads immediately to the consideration of the next petition in the Lord's Prayer, THY WILL BE DONE, I shall conclude with a short comment on the words on which I have been discoursing, in the pious language of a most exemplary Prelate of our own Church.

"May the kingdom of the world become the kingdom of the Lord, and of his Christ. Dethrone, O God, and destroy Satan, and his kingdom, and enlarge the kingdom of grace in every member of thy church. Establish thy kingdom in *our hearts*, O God! We own thee for our King; do thou make and own us for thy faithful subjects. Inspire the conduct of all thy ministers with a pure desire of promoting thy glory, by studying the good of the flock intrusted to their charge. Increase thy flock, most mighty Lord, for the honour of thy holy name; and may we ever preserve the kingdom of thy grace within us, by submitting to the govern-

ment of thy blessed Spirit, and praying for his saving influence, in all our *words* and *works*." And this we beg for the sake, and through the mediation of Jesus Christ our Saviour; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed all power and praise, for ever and ever. Amen.

LECTURE XXXIX.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.—THIRD PETITION.

"Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

ACTS, XXI. 14.

Saying, The will of the Lord be done.

THE words of this third petition in our blessed Master's Prayer, include the very essence of *all* prayer and all religion; for, to do the will of God, and submit to the will of God, completes the Christian character: it is therefore very expedient that we should be most earnest in this petition, because it is by our advancement in this duty that we approach the nearer to the example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; *who in all things sought the will of his heavenly Father; who came down from heaven* (as he assures us), *not to do his own will, but the will of the Father who sent him;* and he adds, *This is the Father's will who hath sent me, that every one that believeth on the Son, may have everlasting life.* And he encourages

our submission to God's sovereign rule, by the most cheering and valuable promises that he can afford us, viz. *all who do this, them will he raise up at the last day.*

In discoursing upon these important words, it may assist your understanding of what is fully implied in them, to consider,

First, what we in general mean by God's will:

Secondly, to show more particularly how God declares his will to us: and,

Thirdly, to make a few observations upon the addition, or concluding part of the petition, "AS IT IS IN HEAVEN."

By the expression, GOD'S WILL, we understand in a general sense, whatever he has made known to us in his WORD respecting it; whatever he communicates to us through the dictates of our own conscience, as agreeable to him; or whatever appears, in the order of his providence, to be his good pleasure: so that in this petition we pray, that we, and all mankind, may both submit to, and cheerfully obey, whatsoever God sees fit to appoint or command for our respective trial in this transitory life; and this (however grievous for this present) we must bear in compliance with our blessed Saviour's lesson of pious resignation—*Not my will, but thine, be done*; and supporting ourselves with the Apostle's consolation, that

though no chastening seems joyous, but grievous, yet that our light afflictions, which are but for a moment (comparatively), are calculated to work for us an *eternal weight of glory*; and that, when we view God's dispensations in the light of unerring direction and loving mercy, and receive them with an humble and Christian spirit, we shall be ready most gratefully to pronounce, *that his commandments are not grievous.*

There are many powerful considerations that will induce persons of a serious turn of mind to resign their own will to God's decrees. Constant observation on the various events of life must convince every one who is well disposed, that it is best for us that all things are under the wise governance of the Supreme Being. If we revert to many circumstances of our own lives, we shall be obliged to confess, that what we have often judged would prove a circumstance of heavy misfortune, has, in due course of time, and by proper application of the event, produced a very different consequence from what our fears suggested, under the doubtful apprehensions of the moment. Nay, the most afflictive visitation to which our present frame is subject, when the weakness of a corrupted nature has recovered strength sufficient to admit the salutary prescription of *religious reasoning*, will often lead us to contemplate the ways of Providence with pious wonder; and thus by acqui-

escing in *his will*, we experience more enlarged views of his divine appointments, and such comfort under our trials, as establishes a hope superior to any positive enjoyment this world can boast. For, when we reflect that here, as well as above, all is governed by God's *will* and permission; that the only reason why we do not always love that will, is, merely because it is often opposite to our own fond and ignorant desires; and that, in the very nature of things, an unerring will must ever militate against the will of a degenerated creature; such thoughts, together with the acknowledgment how continually the gratification of our own will has led us into error, how often we have abused or misapplied the completion of those wishes that seemed to promise us the most exalted satisfaction, will incline us gradually to prefer the *will* of God, and sincerely to exclaim on all occasions, THY WILL BE DONE. In proportion as we attain to the possession of this valuable wisdom, we change our earth into an heaven, we are induced to thank God for every thing, for apparent evil, as well as immediate good; and this from the confidence of humble faith, that temporal evil, under the qualifying direction of his gracious hand, may hereafter prove the instrument of our greatest happiness. When we are actuated by this spirit, we no longer murmur at the inscrutable

decrees of Providence, but we meekly approve his guidance, and venerate the sovereign Author of our fate. When we consider the marvellous revolution of the heavenly bodies, the ultimate good effects upon creation, even from the occasional working of the discordant elements; that the various transactions of mighty empires, and even of private life, are all subservient to the accomplishing of the *Maker's will*; that present or future good proceeds from causes, our shallow knowledge is ready to suppose must have a very different tendency—what do these things teach us, but conviction of an omniscient and omnipotent regulation of events, and resignation to the accomplishment of the same will in our own concerns, which can never fail to work for us the *truest happiness?* In short, when we weigh the reason that *God's will* should be done in all things, we then shall love it; it will necessarily sweeten the bitterest events, and soften the harshest provocations. The Spirit that influenced the divine cause of all the good we have, or can enjoy, will strengthen us to decide with wisdom, will assist us to sacrifice our own polluted inclinations to God's decrees, and to pray that *God's will may reign within us.* Since, then, every thing we see around us, speaks this language of eternal truth, *it is, and must be right:*

—*thine*, O Lord, it is to *will*, and *ours* to *obey*. But,

2. This precept leads us to consider the subject in a closer view. The manner, then, in which God declares his will to us, may be more particularly described in these two ways; either by the universal order of his providence, or the positive rule he has appointed to direct our lives, whether they be implanted in our nature (as the dictates of reason and conscience), or revealed to us in the Gospel of Christ, as objects of faith, to enlighten and improve our reason and direct our conscience.

The petition of THY WILL BE DONE, equally relates to both these ways, and teaches us, after the manner of holy Job, so to pray, that, with respect to the former, we may always seriously refer every thing to the unsearchable designs of God's providence, and, by the inflictions of his governance, endeavour to learn what turn his good pleasure would have our obedience to take, either in acting or suffering. And of this conduct the holy Job sets us a most excellent and memorable copy, under unparalleled trials of human patience and submission to *God's will*. For, in allusion to our being created from the dust of the earth, he makes this humble and becoming confession; ***Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither*** (that is, to the

earth again). *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!* (i. 21.) And, again, in reproach of his wife's ingratitude and graceless ignorance, and her infidelity in tempting him to provoke God's vengeance by his rebellion, he replies with equal resignation, and grateful confidence, *What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?* Are not his time and appointments best for us? Is he not the most proper judge of our needful trials? But a far more exalted pattern of pious submission to God's will is held forth to us in the matchless conduct of the immaculate *Son of God himself,* who, under the agonizing conflict that the sacrifice for sin produced, and terrified (in his human nature) by the weight of sufferings that set themselves in array before him, still relinquished the desire that the human will suggested, and conquering all the weakness inherent to it, he triumphed in these glorious words of import inexpressible to the welfare of our souls—*O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it,* THY WILL BE DONE. In imitation of this divine example, the real Christian will bow contentedly to whatever God shall call him to, whether to a prosperous or unprosperous condition; whether to receive good or evil at his hands. If the former be his lot, he will ever remember

that these blessings are sent to be *improved to the glory of God's name,* by a faithful execution of his stewardship, in consulting the benefit of his needy fellow-creatures. If the latter be his portion, he will see it his duty quickly to submit to whatever trials are allotted him, nay, to rejoice that he is thought worthy to suffer; *for, whom the Lord loveth he correcteth.* And if it is in the cause of righteousness, he will more cheerfully endure every thing for His sake, who suffered so much to rescue him from endless misery, and console himself, *that even Christ was perfected through suffering.*

And in regard to the *written* law that God has graciously furnished for our knowledge and direction, the spirit of this same petition enjoins us likewise to solicit grace, that we may faithfully keep all God's commandments, how contrary soever they may sound to the depraved desires and affections of sinful flesh and blood, and that we may continue God's obedient servants all our days; we must therefore pray with the Psalmist (xl. 10), *that God's law may be written in our hearts.* And the Apostle, speaking of Christ (Heb. x. 9), declares, *Lo, I come to do thy will, O God:* which signifies his obedience, and which is the effect that the grace of God will certainly produce in all who ask it *in his Son's name*; according to the Psalmist's further invocation

(cxiii. 10), *Teach me to do the thing which pleaseth thee, for thou art my God; let thy loving Spirit lead me forth in the land of righteousness.* And that the value of the precept in this petition may make a due impression on our minds, we must frequently set before us the virtue of our Saviour's charge in Matt. vii. 21: *that not every one that saith unto him, Lord, Lord* (that is, that merely bewails his sins, and calls on him for pardon), laying claim to the sufficiency of his *merits*, though he *continue* at the same time to be *careless* of his *commandments* — none of this description *shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.* No; the promise is made to disciples of a very different character; to those only, *who shall do the will of his Father who is in heaven*; that is, who, being conscious that this is the needful *preparation* for a place *there*, and that these fruits are necessary pledges that he hears their petitions, do accordingly pray sincerely, that *God's will may be done in all things*, and that they may have the will to act consistently with it. And the same doctrine is repeated to us by the divine Source of all truth and light in John, iv. 34, where Jesus assures his disciples, by way of parable, *that he had meat to eat, which they knew not of; and that meat was to do the will of the Father, and to finish his work.* And in John, vii. 17, Christ further encourages us to

strive to fulfil this will by an additional promise of the greatest consequence to frail and doubting creatures; and that is, *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God:* that is, the Holy Spirit will enlighten his mind to perceive the truth; will remove all his perplexing scruples, and enable him to become a faithful servant. And the Apostle (who professed to *have no foundation but Jesus Christ, and him crucified)* teaches us (Rom. xii. 1, 2) how we must conduct ourselves in *preparation* for this spiritual illumination: *We must* (1.) *present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God; and* (2.) *we must not be conformed to this world, but we must be transformed, by the renewing of the mind, in order that we may prove what that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God is.* In other words, we must be constant and uniform in our religious duties; we must not be governed by the maxims of the world, but our inclinations and actions must take quite different turns from what we behold to be the general practice of mankind; and then, as Christ speaks, we shall have bodies prepared for the further and more perfect communication of God's good Spirit. Men of all ranks and conditions will then, as the Apostle expresses it (Eph. vi. 6), *find themselves disposed to do the will of God from the heart;* that is, not consulting worldly

interest only, or the favour of others, but doing their service with pure good will, *as unto the Lord, and not unto men.* And that it is part of the will of God that we should perform even our relative and subordinate duties with a view to his glory, and that they are noways to be neglected, is evident from St. Peter's charge, 1 Ep. ii. 15: for, after specifying the obedience due from servants, and proper submission to *every ordinance of men for the Lord's sake,* he declares, *For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.* To finish this head, St. John, in his 1st Epistle (ii. 15), exhorts us *not to love the world, neither the things that are in the world;* meaning, that we should not set our hearts upon them, or put them in competition with God's love, or our duty to him. And he affords us this unanswerable reason, ver. 16, *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father:* and also, that *the world passeth away, and the lust* (or desire) *thereof; but he that doeth the* WILL OF GOD ABIDETH FOR EVER.

From this full account, my brethren, of what the *will of God* is, and of the several ways in which he declares it to us, we may more easily determine why this circumstance is *added*—that it *must be done on earth* AS IT IS IN HEAVEN. The meaning of which part of the petition is

this: that we may have grace to perceive the purity of God's will;—that we may arrive as near as possible in our submission to it, as *those blessed spirits do, who behold the face of their Father who is in heaven.* And the explanation of these words may serve for the readier understanding another scriptural passage of similar import, where our blessed Lord (Matt. v. 48) exhorts us *to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect;* that is, according to the Apostle's comment on the passage, *followers of God, as dear children:* not that in this life it is possible for us to attain to such a positive perfection of obedience as angels possess; much less can we expect to equal the Source of all perfection and excellence; but our Lord was here discoursing of CHARITY, the prime of all the Christian virtues; and he proposes the divine goodness for our example, that so, in the exercise of that virtue, we should soar above the common *practice of the world;* and as it was the greatest perfection of the DEITY, we should imitate HIM as our true father, and most perfect pattern. Thus, as the angels in heaven not only do the will of God, but do it with all readiness, cheerfulness, constancy, and delight; so we should pray, that it may please God to assist us to fulfil it in like manner to the utmost possible degree, according to the lofty declaration of the Psalmist (ciii. 20, 21), which is very ap-

plicable to the case before us: *O praise the Lord, ye angels of his, ye that excel in strength, ye that fulfil his commandments, and hearken unto the voice of his words: O praise the Lord all ye his hosts, ye servants of his that do his pleasure.* Although, therefore, it is hardly to be expected that we shall come up to so much excellence while here, yet we must pray for it, and use our best endeavours; for by these lessons we are taught, not only in what manner we ought to serve God now, but how hereafter we shall do his will, and how we are to prepare ourselves for his service. when we come to the blessed state and place of those holy spirits in heaven.

To conclude: That we may judge of the great necessity, my brethren, of this petition, and this practice, let us unite in humbling ourselves with the consideration of the extreme depravity of our present natural state, which disinclines us from following the *will* of God in the manner that would truly profit us. When we seriously attend to the perverseness of our own will, we shall gladly apply for help to mend its baneful inclination. In ease and health, and under passing circumstances, we are ready enough to subscribe to the will of God. But, alas! when pain, or sickness, or misfortune, or the injurious treatment of the world assault us, how does the stubborn disposition of fallen nature demonstrate both our wretchedness and in-

firmity! what weakness, what want of fortitude and faith do we discover, when God is pleased to visit and try us with any of the above calamities and corrections! As we cannot, the very best of us, but be conscious of this miserable deficiency in yielding to God's will, surely this is a grace that above all others we stand in need of, viz. to be able religiously to *submit*, and say, THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH, O LORD, AS IT IS DONE IN HEAVEN. That, then, which it behoves all of us to do, is to pray to God to teach us how far the example of our Saviour Christ should lead us; who, with regard to himself, declares, *that he always did what pleased his heavenly Father*. As he did nothing on earth but according to his Father's will, and as through him we are encouraged to call that glorious Being OUR *Father*, we must supplicate that gracious Saviour to intercede for us, that the *same* will may be perfected in *us* his servants, as he himself obeyed it, to the glory of the Almighty; that, being inseparably united to him by the powerful working of his Spirit to obedience, we may never seek to do our will but his; that is, may receive every event of our lives as having an intentional tendency to our final happiness. Then will every action be converted to God's service; not our mere positive religious duties, but even our meals, our rest, our conversation, and our connexions, will all be influ-

enced by a becoming desire to *please God.* In short, our whole conduct will be sanctified, every thing we do will have the nature of an humble sacrifice. In truth, our lives will then, in the strictest sense, become *incessant prayer.*

Happy for us, did we earnestly experience such a disposition! But never can we hope for such a blessed state, till the rebellious will is subjected by grace to the will of the Almighty: therefore let us humbly join in prayer, that God would give us light to see, a heart to close with, and a power to do, *his will* at all times; that he would subdue that natural aversion which we have to do *his will alone;* and that on every occasion profitable to our souls, we may ever have grace to say, THY WILL (O Lord!) BE DONE ON EARTH, EVEN AS IT IS IN HEAVEN; and that by the power obtained for us through Jesus Christ our Lord, we may all become finally perfect. To whom, &c.

LECTURE XL.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.—FOURTH PETITION.

" Give us this day our daily bread."

MATTHEW, IV. 4.

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

HAVING endeavoured to give you a full and plain explanation of the three former petitions of the Lord's Prayer, which (as I observed before) related principally to the honour and glory of God, we come to consider the *first* of these petitions, which more immediately concerns our own particular wants.

By these words, GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD, we are taught a valuable lesson of dependence upon Him *in whom we live, and move, and have our being*—the author of every good gift; to whose favour we are indebted for our daily support, and all the comforts we enjoy.

The method I shall follow in enlarging upon these words, will be, previously to notice from

the general signification of this part of the Prayer before us, that, as man consists of a soul and body, and consequently requires several things to be bestowed upon him for the good of both, so we are here directed to beg of God, *first*, what is necessary to our present life; and *secondly*, what will contribute to the everlasting happiness of our souls in the life to come.

Now, every necessary support of this life is here comprehended by our blessed Saviour under the single article of *bread*, which even signifies all needful supplies both for soul and body. At present I shall confine myself to the latter. In regard, then, to its nourishment of the body, it is a word commonly used in Scripture to describe all sorts of provision, because, being the chief and most necessary, it may supply the defect of all other: and we have read as early as Gen. iii. 19, that when the Almighty was denouncing a curse upon man for his disobedience, he represents the general sustenance that the creature was to obtain by labour by this same word: *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy* BREAD; and in Gen. xviii. 5, 6, 7, we find all the hospitable fare which Abraham provided for the angels that were sent to him, is comprehended under this single word, *And I will fetch a morsel of* BREAD, *and comfort you.*

Now, in the petition before us, this word is

not used merely to denote what is requisite for the bare existence of the body, as meat and drink, both which are implied in Jacob's vow, in Gen. xxviii. 20: *If God will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on;* and which same import is again conveyed in these words of Isaiah (iii. 1), *For, behold the Lord doth take away from Judah the whole stay or staff of bread, and the whole stay of water;* but it is likewise employed to express every other necessary of life, as raiment, lodging, and the like: at the same time it must always be understood as descriptive of essential comforts, and never as extending to superfluities, that is, to the desire of such objects as are coveted rather for the indulgence of our appetites, than for the preservation of our being: and of this we may be fully satisfied, by that lesson of moderation prescribed to us by the Apostle in 1 Tim. vi. 6—8, that *godliness with contentment is great gain; and that having food and raiment, we should be therewith content.* But for your perfect understanding of this expression, we will consider more particularly, in how many respects what we request of God in this petition, may be called OUR BREAD. In one sense it may be justly denominated OURS, as being what is immediately necessary for OURSELVES, and those who depend upon our care of them; or it may be equally styled OUR bread

on another account, in regard to the natural property we have in it, as it is the product of our estates, the effect of our own labour, or the benefaction of others, and thus particularly distinguished from the bread of fraud or oppression, of stealth or covetousness; that so we may live upon what is truly our OWN, and not become unworthy devourers of our neighbour's bread, according to the spirit of Agur's prayer in Prov. xxx. 8, 9; *Remove from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of God in vain.* In this view of the expression, therefore, we pray God to continue that blessing upon the means his providence has in general provided for us, that we may cherish content and dependence upon his bounteous care, and, by the experience of his undeserved goodness, may be secured from encroaching upon, or coveting, the goods of others. In short, it implies gratitude, faith, and a thorough sense of our own insufficiency to persevere in an innocent course of life without his favour.

The next term in the petition that presents itself to our consideration, is the word DAILY: this also relates to our temporal benefit, and is attended by another word which will likewise require to have its meaning explained. The words

taken together, signify thus much: 1. That God would every day vouchsafe what is sufficient for our welfare; for, without this probable prospect of his providential care, it would fall little short of miracle to expect him to supply a positive provision for each day, which was to cease, and be renewed, as the day returned. This was the particular and miraculous manner in which he fed his people in the wilderness; but the distribution of his mercies to mankind is now under the government of a more general providence and appointment. It implies an acknowledgment, that, without his uniform permission, our successive support must cease. And we add, THIS DAY, or *day by day*, to show, that though, from the uncertainty of our present life (and how many or how few days we have to come, we cannot tell), we ask of God no more than is needful for our present sustenance; yet we humbly trust, that God, of his goodness, will every day give us OUR BREAD, as he did the Jews their *manna in the wilderness*, where (as just now observed) he fed them by a positive miracle: *For he rained bread from heaven for them; and the people were to gather a certain rate every day, that he might prove them, whether they would walk in his law or not; for on the sixth day they were commanded, in honour of the sabbath, to gather twice as much as they gather-*

ed daily, that they might REST *upon the sabbath-day.*

And in support of this becoming confidence in God's care over those who humbly rely upon his protection, we have this further lesson given us by two of the Apostles; St. Paul exhorting us, in Heb. xiii. 5, *to be content with such things as we have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.* And St. Peter (1 Ep. v. 7) presses the very same doctrine upon similar grounds, urging us *to cast all our care on God, because he careth for us.* It is our duty and interest, therefore, confidently to look up to Heaven for the continuance of our prosperity, as long as God shall think fit to prolong our state of pilgrimage upon earth, till the blessed time of refreshing shall come, when he will remove us to our heavenly Canaan, that better country which in mercy he has provided for us.

Serious reflections on the purport of these words, *Give us this day our daily bread,* will likewise guard us from being puffed up with any degree of success the Lord may please to send us. By daily owning the mighty Hand who *can give and take away,* according to his wisdom and good pleasure, we shall be prevented from entertaining any vain conceit of our own ability to obtain, or power to preserve, the various good things of this life, so liable to captivate our affections, and wean us from our duty: we

shall neither be tempted, when full, to deny the hand that prospers us, and say, *Who is the Lord?* nor, with the blinded worldling in the Gospel, to fix our hearts upon these transient possessions, and say, *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thy rest, eat, drink, and be merry:* knowing that the same sentence pronounced against him, may punish our ingratitude and folly; viz. *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee, and then whose shall these things be?*

After all that has been said, we must not absurdly fancy, that the design of our praying to God for such a due succession of support as is implied in these words of the petition, is to uphold an idle, presumptuous, and superstitious hope of favour from above: it is not to exclude our own reasonable care in providing for ourselves, and much less to excuse our labouring for it. We have abundant proofs in Holy Writ that God did never encourage such expectations. The lot of man, as related in the beginning of my Discourse, was, that he should *eat his* bread *in the sweat of his brow;* and the Apostle (Acts, xx. 34), though most singularly preserved on many occasions, and employed particularly in God's work, appeals to those he taught for the industry of his conduct: *Yea, ye yourselves know* (says he) *that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with*

me. Though he could lawfully have expected a reasonable reward for his labour, he submitted to the ordinary means of getting a living; much less presumed he to trust to a miracle of bounty for his support; and he confirms the expediency and propriety of his so doing in 1 Cor. iv. 11, 12: *For, when exposed to hunger and thirst, to nakedness and want* of comfortable retirement, he submits to labour, *working with his own hands,* and, doubtless, blessing God all the time, for the ability even of *such* means of procuring *daily bread;* and in another place he asserts (2 Thess. iii. 9), *that he did this, not because he had no power of obtaining a supply, but to afford them an example of becoming industry;* since he *positively commanded, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.*

The spirit of this petition, then, is merely intended to keep alive our trust in God, and to cultivate the most profitable of all the Christian graces, the increase of our *humility;* to show that we depend altogether upon the providence of God, and owe both our lives and every article of our preservation, not to our own cunning or wise management, but solely to his *blessing* and supreme *permission;* and thus (by daily renewing this principle of reliance on him) to engage us more readily to make those returns of love and praise, that compose the obvious

bounden duty of depending creatures towards their heavenly Benefactor.

This tribute of incumbent gratitude, all ranks and orders of mankind are equally bound to pay—the rich as well as the poor. Our blessed Lord composed his Prayer for both alike. It is the same Providence which allots and prospers their respective posts, who distributes plenty to the one, and confines the other to what he sees sufficient.

Having been rather copious on this first head, I shall conclude it with answering an objection which probably this doctrine may present to some, and which I barely hinted in another place; and that is, if we are required to place such a total confidence in God's daily care of us and our concerns, it may be asked whether this implies, that it is unlawful to care for, or provide, any thing for the future; and whether there is not a *particular* passage delivered by our Lord himself, which seems to favour such a surmise: the words are in Matt. vi. 25: *Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body what ye shall put on.* (34.) Again, *Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.* These texts, I say, compared with the literal sense of *Give us this day our daily bread,* may at first seem to intimate, that because our

heavenly Father knoweth that we need these things, it is unnecessary to trouble ourselves about the matter. But this, we may be very certain, is not a safe sense of the passage before us. For God, we know, has sent us even to a busy *insect,* to learn both industry and precaution: (Prov. vi. 6—8,) *Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise; for she provideth her meat in summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.* Of this we may be assured, therefore, that such a care as goes no further than a prudent foresight, and neither prompts us to any evil, nor keeps us back from any good, is certainly not only innocent in itself, but pleasing in the sight of God; and it is much more likely that such as trust rashly to preternatural aid alone (in that it is tempting God to act out of the ordinary course of his providence), will be deserted by him, and exposed to temptation for that support, which the industrious and provident will avoid, by an humble hope of God's needful blessing upon their own exertion; and which being absolutely necessary to prosper all our own best endeavours, is what is strictly to be understood by *giving us our daily bread;* i. e. God's favour in constantly vouchsafing to prosper our natural wishes for what is needful and profitable for us. And indeed, unless such contrivance and care were lawful, the world could not subsist at all,

but by continual miracle, which it is both folly and presumption to expect, where God's blessing on the ordinary methods of provision is sufficient for the end desired. And for the soundness of this doctrine we have again the precedent of the Apostles themselves; for we read, Acts, xi. 28, 29, 30, that when they understood that there was a famine likely to happen in the land where their fellow-labourers were stationed, *then did they every man, according to his ability, determine to send relief to the brethren in Judea.* They left them not to any miraculous interposition of the Almighty in their favour; not through any distrust of his power, or his regard for them; but judging most religiously, that the means they adopted were such as was agreeable to his purpose, and such as he had appointed, by putting it into their hearts to do. Thus, again, he deals out daily bread, or support, to his several creatures, by prospering their worldly affairs in the vast variety of shapes and degrees in which they apply to different persons, raising them up unexpected friends, and directing to means that can only be resolved into the gracious will of Divine Providence. Again, in 1 Cor. xvi. 2, we see the same active and regular provision consulted in the command, *that every one, as God had prospered him, was to lay up by him, on the first day of the week,* something towards the collection for the saints

that were in narrow circumstances; and in 2 Cor. viii. 12, we have indisputable testimony, that God approves of such precaution, in the Apostle's assurance, that it is *accepted* by him (if there is a willing mind in the gift), *and that according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not;* upon the same principle that the widow's mite was equally received as the more considerable present to the treasury. Now, as the Scriptures were inspired by the Spirit of wisdom, by the Spirit of Christ *himself*, it is impossible to conceive he should speak anything inconsistent with them, or that the Apostles should differ from the sentiments of their Master. These words, therefore, of our blessed Lord, will admit of a very plain exposition and natural limitation. They only intimate, that the carefulness our Saviour forbids, and which is truly sinful, is that which proceeds from an immoderate concern for the future, by which we seem to preclude the necessity of God's *continual* blessing, in the sense of bestowing *on us our daily bread*, and to entertain a *distrust* of his needful protection and power; which leads us to build upon the value of mere temporal possessions (such as, *Soul, take thy rest*, &c.), and to harbour doubt, that the same good Providence which has taken care of us formerly, will cease to send us new supplies, and point out new expedients, as fresh necessities and difficulties re-

quire them. The true meaning, therefore, of *the morrow providing for itself*, is, that *God's hand is not shortened*, and that, by humble faithful dependence on his favour and power, he will continue to provide for the morrow's wants for the future, as well as for the present day. For, unless we refer it to the direction of the Supreme, and his never-ceasing and superintending care over the affairs of his creatures, it must suppose miraculous intervention, the error of which has been already exposed.

Our Saviour only discourses against the ungrateful apprehension of future trials, before they are sent—for, *sufficient to the day* (says our Lord) *is the evil thereof*. In this passage, therefore, we are taught, not to indulge any useless and injurious cares, not to add sin to the other numberless imperfections we are hourly guilty of, not to borrow the uncertain anxieties and distresses of the morrow to sadden those of the present day; but rather to console ourselves with this reflection, *that, as our heavenly Father hath given us life, which is more than meat, and the body, which is better than raiment*; so, if we close with the divine philosophy of our blessed Master, we shall improve our faith from the example he instances, that he will not prefer the very *birds and flowers* to us, since we are certainly more valuable in God's sight than they are; and having greatly

the advantage of them in sowing, reaping, and gathering into barns, we may safely depend on his blessing these many means adapted to our different condition of being. In short, this passage is chiefly levelled at a faithless uneasiness and discontent; against more dependence on our foresight and exertions, than God's blessing on our patient and moderate endeavours. And that this violent carefulness is faulty as well as needless, is very evidently represented in this pointed question—*Which of you, by the utmost anxiety, can add to his age or stature the smallest moment or measure beyond what God shall appoint?* How senseless, therefore, must it be to place any confidence in riches or any other worldly advantages, independent of God's will and favour!

Having, I hope, removed any doubts concerning the true meaning of these particular passages of Scripture, and the objection arising from them; I shall conclude with a short view of the second division of the subject, viz.

How the expression of our *daily bread*, can justly relate to *the everlasting happiness of our souls in the life to come.*

It is very certain, that in this petition our requests are not confined to those bare wants that have been so fully specified, but that the BREAD here prayed for, does also contain a spiritual meaning. It is not only bodily food and

comforts, but also the nourishment of truth which God daily ministers to our souls, that we must likewise solicit at his hands; since, as the text assures us, *men do not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God: it is the bread which nourisheth to eternal life;* the participation of that Spirit, of that bread that came down from heaven, of which if we do not partake, *we have no life in us.* For, as the natural bread is necessary to support our bodily strength; so is the spiritual food no less essential to the soul's health, and to make us strong in trials of faith. In the true spirit, therefore, of this petition, we must earnestly solicit every day such inward disposition of purity and perfect resignation to what God allots us in this our state of Christian warfare, as will enable us to receive all outward circumstances as tending to the good end of fitting us for a better state. We must view them in the light of a divine appointment, as proper to advance us in faith and self-denial, and then we shall receive our *daily bread* from him in a sense as actually necessary, and far more valuable than the other *(as, without him, we can do nothing)*, and be convinced that our soul's improvement is infinitely preferable to bodily ease or enjoyment.

And of the truth and reason of this we may readily judge, by the plainness of this com-

parison. For, as hunger is what gives the best relish to our common food, and is the cause of its salutary *digestion;* so, if we do not experience a *hunger and thirst after righteousness,* we can never expect that the hasty and sparing manner in which we usually partake of that nourishment, will convey substantial benefit to our souls; since it is with them as with our bodies in one respect, they thrive by similar means. We are apt to count those *sick,* who have lost their *appetite;* and just so is it with our immortal part: it necessarily languishes, and is in a dangerous state, as long as it is without a spiritual desire for *that* food which God alone can give it. And if our spiritual appetites were but as keen as those which actuate our bodily frame, the happy effect would soon be visible; and why are they not, when so important a consequence is at stake? The *reason* is very evident: because the corruptible body *presseth down the soul,* and we have need of a preternatural power to assist our conflict; for, however *willing be the spirit, the flesh is weak,* and not capable of helping itself alone. Against this malady our blessed Lord has graciously appointed this remedy of PRAYER; and in these very words of the fourth petition he enjoins us to apply to God for his all-sufficient aid, that he would afford us principally such a portion of that daily bread also, as is expedient to support

us under the infirmities of a degenerated nature; that he would bestow upon us those graces that will best correct our peculiar failings, to which, by constitution or employment, we are most exposed; root out all destructive and inveterate habits; in short, vouchsafe us the bread of heaven, as well as earthly bread; and furnish us with the general provision of truth and righteousness, to know what is strictly good for us, and to be filled and strengthened with it. *That* is the spiritual bread (my brethren) we should ever covet, when we repeat the supplication of, GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD. On this we must daily feed, or we shall be reduced to lament at last (in the language of the Prophet), *My leanness, my leanness, woe is me!* (Isaiah, xxiv. 16.) For this we should approach God's throne with all the earnestness of *beggars* that are pained through hunger. And however the insensibility of our own hearts, or the fascinations of this present life, may hinder us from believing, it is a truth (of which we can never be too firmly persuaded), that the *worst of all poverty* is to be insensible of our *spiritual* wants.

Let us then, henceforth, read and pray with this mental hunger, which may make us languish after what should feed our souls; and with this vehement thirst after that water

which springeth up into everlasting life, which the Spirit of Christ *alone can give*, and which he hath promised to all who ask it of him, to all who labour for this gift of God, and seek Him who hath power to bestow it.

Continual desire of instruction is what we supplicate in this petition, to qualify us for the knowledge of the wondrous things that accompany God's laws; and as every one receives this knowledge only in the proportion of the sincerity and earnestness with which he desires it, let us conclude this humble service with fervent prayer to God, that in the most essential sense our souls require, he will most graciously give us *all*, both THIS, and *every day we live*, OUR DAILY BREAD: and this for the sake and merits of Jesus Christ our Lord, the author of this and every other mercy we receive. To whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed all might, majesty, and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.

LECTURE XLI.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.—FIFTH PETITION.

"And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us."

LUKE, VI. 37.

Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.

THE fifth petition of this holy Prayer, which our blessed Master hath commanded us to use continually, contains a precept of most *momentous import* for our consideration; and it becomes more essentially valuable in proportion to the difficulty of receiving it and complying with it; for, to forgive with a true Christian spirit, i. e. in the complete sense of the expression, is of all others the hardest of our incumbent duties, and that which opposes most the carnal spirit of man.

As there is no subject on which a minister of Christ's Gospel can treat, which it more becomes us to understand, I will use my best endeavours to make a close inquiry into the true nature of forgiveness; and pray God to give his

blessing to what is said, that all present may depart with full conviction, how deeply it concerns us to cultivate these serious terms of our salvation.

To render the present instruction more plain and useful to you, it may be proper to pursue the following method:

First, To inquire into the true cause of the difficulty of forgiving our enemies, which will tend to exalt the blessing of a placable temper.

Secondly, To propose some helps towards removing the difficulty, by showing how we may be benefited, even by evil treatment; which will assist in encouraging the opposite spirit of *meekness and forbearance:* and,

Thirdly, By the application of what has been advanced, to establish the absolute necessity of possessing such a degree of this Christian virtue, as finally to render us just objects of divine commiseration and favour; this being the very condition on which we can expect to receive the blessing we are taught to pray for by our blessed Lord himself.

First, then, all disinclination to forgive does certainly originate in the pride and weakness of a fallen nature; for pride, which is the foundation of every other evil, is particularly instrumental in feeding unforgiveness: and this base passion is again grounded in weakness; for it is a Christian axiom (i. e. a self-evident thing, or

a thing evident at *first sight)*, that, in proportion as we are advanced in true Christian knowledge, grace, or strength, the less proud we shall be of any thing we possess—the more we discover and confess the corruption and perverseness of our carnal nature, the readier we shall consequently become to make every possible allowance for the occasional misconduct of other people. In proportion as we have conquered the effects of pride, by the influence of the Gospel on our hearts, the less will any malevolent usage have to feed upon within us, and the easier we shall find ourselves to forgive. The latent cause of the difficulty, then, may be said to be the degree of opposition we find to our SELF-LOVE, through such treatment as, by giving offence, produces hatred. This prejudice in our own favour renders us partial in our judgment, and blind to the many motives that might help to moderate our dislikes and resentment. Pride is ever haughty, impatient, and captious; that is, easily provoked, and suspicious of intended injury. From a high opinion of a man's own merit, he often arrogates more notice than is his due; he fancies wrongs that never existed. While this passion rules within, and the more we dwell upon any conduct that inflames it, the more will our aversion to the object increase; or, in other words, our hatred growing stronger, we shall become less inclined

to encourage the *true spirit* of forgiveness. *Learn of me,* saith Christ (Matt. xi. 29); *for I am meek and lowly of heart:* and for this reason, doubtless, our Lord joins meekness with humility, because the latter is the source of the former. We must, therefore, pray heartily for this grace, the more we find our constitutional temper disinclined towards it; for, when once we feel the necessity of despising ourselves for possessing such hurtful dispositions, we shall be content to be despised by those to whom those dispositions are justly offensive. He that thinks nothing due to him, will never think himself neglected, or at least will be indifferent about it. There is no possibility of attaining to any valuable degree of meekness, till we have learnt in good measure to renounce ourselves; and then we shall be capable of presenting this petition with sincerity, and to good effect.—The CAUSE of the hardness of our hearts having been thus briefly stated, when a thorough conviction of this hinderance has taken place in us, we shall soon discover the necessity of the condition it holds out, and the great value of the blessings which this petition teaches us to ask of God for our souls.

Now, it consists of two parts: *the forgiveness of sins past,* and the prevention of them for *the time to come.* But before we proceed to the second division of the subject, I will offer a

few thoughts on the meaning of these words. 1. The manner we pray to God, to forgive our sins past, is contained in the words of these conditions; "Forgive us *our* trespasses AS we for- "give them that trespass against US." By these words we mean, that God would do away, or pardon, all our sins, of what nature or quality soever they be, according to the Psalmist's description of this blessing (xxxii.), *Blessed is he whose unrighteousness is forgiven, and whose sin is covered;* and the necessary preparation for this favour is expressed in the fifth verse: *I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord; and so thou forgavest the wickedness thereof.* And in Psalm cxxx. 3, 4, he further magnifies God's mercy by his purity and contrition: *If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord,* WHO *may abide it? for there is mercy with thee, therefore thou shalt be feared.* And the judgment of Solomon upon the same case is exactly *similar* (Prov. xxviii. 13): *He that* COVERETH *his sins, shall not prosper; but who confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy:* which agrees particularly with the declaration of St. John (1 Ep. i. 9), that *if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;* that is, to remit the punishment our sins have deserved, for the sake of Jesus Christ, who has reconciled us to God by the sacrifice of his death. All

these texts, therefore, clearly show, that we must not harbour the sin of unforgiveness in any shape or degree whatever, if we expect God to have mercy upon *us*. And the reason of our making the petition daily is extremely plain: because we daily offend more or less, and therefore stand in need of fresh application for pardon day by day, through His mediation and intercession, *who is mighty to save all who come unto God* BY HIM.

Secondly. As we all stand in need of God's infinite mercy, on this account particularly; and as the difficulties we have to struggle with through a depraved nature, do greatly hinder our proper application to the throne of grace; we will now endeavour to propose some helps towards correcting this evil disposition, and which are founded both on reason and religion. To this good end we shall do well to consider seriously the common infirmity of human nature; we must call in that first of all Christian virtues, *Christian charity*, to our aid.—*Charity*, we are told, *covereth the multitude of sins;* and under no description of transgression is it so applicable and essential, as in the sin of *unforgiveness*. We must also avail ourselves of Christ's golden maxim of *doing unto all men as we would be done unto*. We must, therefore, strive to bend our stubborn and proud hearts, so as to place ourselves as nearly as possible in

the place of those who have offended *us:* we must suppose ourselves posseseed of the same weakness that they are, under the same provocations real or imaginary, and void of such religious and other advantages as might contribute to produce a better judgment than what governs the offended person. In short, we must strive to follow the Apostle's advice (Gal. vi. 2), *to bear one another's burdens;* not that the purest charity requires us to be blind to the faults of others, but that we should avoid both unnecessary notice of them, and especially (in the case before us) the practice of magnifying them, so as to cherish and prolong a wrathful temper of mind. Charity likewise prescribes another help; which is, not to be insensible of the good qualities of those who displease us, while we are so sharp-sighted to their bad ones. This will tend greatly to soften our animosity. We must strictly and religiously recollect, how many reasons we have to except against our own conduct, in numberless instances; and if we happily experience that we are not so addicted to slander, or so governed by this evil spirit, as those who provoke our complaints, we must consider who it is that causes us to differ; what a change God may in a moment work in the most unworthy characters; and that if we are under the influence of grace ourselves, it is to his mercy and power only we are indebted for

it. Thus true charity, or Christian love, *worketh no evil;* but viewing all things in the same light that God does (with compassion and allowance), it must consequently extend itself to the meanest of his creatures, and be disposed to cultivate forgiveness, or that disposition which is but another name for LOVE. As charity, therefore, does not render us insensible, neither does grace take away our knowledge of what is injurious and unworthy; but as the first teaches mercy, so the other inclines us to bear with every species of ill usage, in devout submission to the secret designs of Providence. Now, this consideration will open another door of consolation under the heaviest wrongs that can befal us, and also soften our conduct towards the author of them; and it is founded upon a principle likewise, which, of all others, is most likely to operate in convincing us, and that is, our OWN *benefit*, which, when it refers to the good of our souls, we never can be too earnest in promoting.

A few serious reflections may help to strengthen the present argument for forgiveness. 1. If we call to mind, that the direction of all things is in the hand of God; 2. that he can render the sharpest instrument of trouble, conducive to our greatest good; 3. that he has declared, vengeance is his, and he will repay; and if we add the great necessity of having our

faults corrected, our patience *tried*, and all our virtues *perfected*, it will assist prodigiously in conquering a spirit of rancour and hasty retaliation. There cannot be a more natural consequence, than that a mind in the habits of religious consideration, will be led, when traduced by false and scandalous reports and unworthy treatment, to set about examining its principles and conduct in the closest and most impartial manner. Can any Christian hesitate a moment to see the value, and even comfort, to be derived from such a measure, however galling to flesh and blood? for, in whatever degree or shape occasional offence might have been given, by tracing every action rigidly to its native principle, the mind becomes sensible of its own weakness or depravity; it confesses in secret to God its fallibility; it is drawn to the purest repentance for its own share in the offence of another; and the purer this will be, the more the error appears to have been founded in self-love. It disclaims all confidence in its own strength or virtue, independent of God's help and a view to his glory; and, on the other hand, in proportion as it is conscious of its innocence, and of having been actuated by the influence of grace and principles of obedience, it experiences a comfort that no language can express, nor the utmost malice of mankind can lessen. It acknowledges the hand of God in

every dispensation; learns to distrust itself in future; and to consider the badness as well as goodness of the creature, as subservient to God's glory: and making that the general end of every design, it becomes in future more circumspect as to the manner of conducting itself. In short, as it recovers from this humbling cloud, it brightens in perfection; and even if to the eyes of men, prejudice, perverseness, or ignorance of the truth, should add affliction, by denying an immediate vindication, the utility of the trial unites with inward peace, to resign to it with submission; and a trust in the certainty, that one day the secrets of all hearts will be made known, and that God will decide with justice, supports it against the utmost sev erity of persecution.

Thus our very passions and affections, by being directed in a right course, may lead us to the most valuable reflections; and the censures of a weak or wicked person become finally the happy cause of correcting our mistakes and failings, and improving our virtue.

This is the wise and profitable light in which we should view the unkindest conduct of our fellow-creatures: this will not permit us to humour ourselves in an impatient or disdainful temper; to *return evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing*. Which introduces the last help I shall mention at present

towards building up a spirit of forgiveness in us, and that is, praying for our enemies. *Pray for them that persecute you, and despitefully use you,* is a general precept of sovereign influence in stifling the suggestions of bitter rancour. If, when basely used, we immediately have recourse to this habit, on a principle of obedience to Him who supplied us with the remedy, we shall find the blessed effect in the renewing spirit of its *heavenly Author*. It will make us principally regard and rely only upon God, and prevent our suffering spiritually by the disappointments and provocations to which all are subjected through the folly and corruptions of the world.

As Christians, we cannot avoid occasionally thinking of the misery of their fate who are shut out of heaven, or of the blessed state of those who shall be admitted into God's presence for evermore. On this score, then, we pray even for our enemies, in imitation of our divine Pattern, and by constantly praying for them, we shall learn more and more to forgive them; for it is impossible we can hate those whom we wish to be as happy as ourselves, the deadly nature of unforgiveness not admitting us to hate and love at the *same* time.

We should endeavour, therefore, as much as possible, to rectify the errors of those with whom we differ, to make every allowance for our common weakness, nor let that be a reason for our

no longer being intimate with them, or preventing all reconciliation. Though we may be shocked at the faults we see in others, we should ever remember we are not without our faults ourselves; and though we receive trouble by their perverseness, few can say, they have not been the occasion of vexation by some untoward means or other. But lastly, and above all other checks to the malignant spirit of unforgiveness, and as a help to a better frame of mind, we should never lose sight of this weighty argument, that supposing men had nothing to reproach us with, yet, when we consider the deep and hourly obligations we owe to God, for his tender mercy and long-suffering for our innumerable transgressions and ungrateful provocations, and without which we must perish everlastingly, it should operate effectually, to secure that forbearance towards *others*, of which the very best Christians stand so much in need.

And this leads naturally to the third and last division of my Discourse, which is the tremendous import of the *condition*, in these words, AS *we forgive others*; since in that *degree*, and so far *only*, may *we* expect mercy. This is of far greater moment than even our present peace of mind, or the fullest vindication before men; for it concerns our eternal misery or welfare. Listen, then, to the paraphrase of the petition in the express words of Jesus Christ (Mark, xi.

25): *And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any, that your Father also, who is in heaven, may forgive you your trespasses.* And again (Luke, vi. 36, 37), *Be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.* And it is still more expressly worded in Matt. vi. 14, 15: *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men* THEIR *trespasses, neither will your Father forgive* YOUR *trespasses.* I wish to show you how strongly this is insisted upon in the Gospel, in order, my brethren, that we may take care to make good the *positive condition* on which our *own* salvation depends. At the same time it is very proper we should know, that this *alone* will not entitle us to God's forgiveness, though, without it, we must not expect his favour. This is most clear from the declaration of God *himself*, as above quoted; but it is necessary likewise, in order to become fit objects of God's pardon, that we not only forgive others, but repent ourselves most truly of *all* our past sins, and daily implore pardon of them in the name, and through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Saviour. The sense in which we offer these words (AS *we forgive them that trespass against us*), is that before mentioned:—First,

as a proper consideration to be presented by us to God, to engage him to forgive us, it being the fulfilling his own precept, in the very words of the Lord's Prayer; Luke, xi. 4: *And forgive us our sins,* FOR *we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.* If we, who are weak, proud, and peevish, easy to be affronted, and hard to be reconciled, do yet, for God's sake, and in obedience to his commands, forgive those who have offended us; here is ground of good hope, that our most perfect, gracious, and merciful Father will forgive us in what we have offended *him:* but if we, who in comparison owe a *thousand talents,* are hard and unrelenting against those who owe us but *one,* with what confidence or security can we ask remission of our HEAVY DEBT? It becomes, therefore,

Secondly, an assurance upon the same grounds, that if we truly repent of our sins, and beg of God to forgive them, he will most certainly hear our most earnest and humble prayer, from the motive of our own charity and tenderness to one another. And,

Thirdly, it was a conditon of great consequence to be *added,* in order to remind us of the necessity we are under to forgive injuries, though ever so many, great, often and most provokingly committed, as is fully proved in Matt. xviii. 21, and to the end of the chapter; where our blessed Master describes our positive compliance with this precept by this *injunction,*

not only till *seven times, but till seventy times seven:* that is to say, there is no limitation admitted as to the nature of our true forgiveness; we are to do it readily, heartily and completely, during our whole lives, and to the very last moment. In truth, in general, so convinced are many of the necessity of this, when they approach their latter end, that, when there is no further room for indulging a morose and unrelenting spirit, they profess to be exceedingly earnest in declaring themselves in perfect charity with the world, though, by continuance in a different temper to that moment, there is too great reason to fear, were they allowed a further trial, they would suffer the same unchristian spirit to return, and exhibit as woful marks as ever, of an unregenerate and unforgiving nature. This is a sad test of our inbred evil disposition; and by what we see is the seeming wish in others, when they think they have nothing more to do with their connexions of this life, we should strive (while time is allowed us) to correct this most dangerous of all the evil qualities of a fallen nature. Now, the absolute necessity of pure forgiveness is most powerfully binding from this awful consideration, that, till we have forgiven, and show the most incontestable marks of it, it is quite in vain, and only mocking God, to pray for his forgiveness. It must be

done sincerely, and not partially and formally only; for God, who searcheth the heart, however we may succeed in deceiving one another by a fair outside show, will certainly find us out, if we trifle in the measure of it. We may deceive *men*, and answer some selfish purpose, by pretending a reconciliation, where it does not *really* exist; but as we cannot deceive God, neither will this kind of forgiveness answer any good end in forwarding our own salvation. As we value our soul's welfare, we must pray constantly and *devoutly* for this grace; for, so apt is this truly diabolical spirit to rankle and increase, for want of early and resolutely resisting it, that nothing but the all-powerful grace or aid of the Holy Spirit can soften and eradicate it from the carnal mind. Few there are, but must have experienced some ungrateful, cruel, and injurious treatment:—happy and glorious, if from the heart they wish a reconciliation, and can honestly present the hand of undisguised friendship to their enemies. And if this is so expedient and indispensable from us towards those who have seriously offended us by transgressing against the positive laws of Christian deportment, how much more incumbent is it to return to a meek, peaceable, and loving frame of mind, where no actual malevolence has ever existed on the part of those against whom we have long cherished an inveterate dislike, and where the ani-

mosity may possibly have originated in false conceptions, and faulty dispositions of our own; trifles wrought into *realities* by the subtle operation of the great enemy upon the weakest and most *vulnerable* part of our degenerated composition. Dreadful, therefore, must their case be, who still continue in such *gall of bitterness* as daily to harden themselves against conviction of the innocence of those by whom they fancy they are, or have been, really aggrieved; since all who offer up their Saviour's holy form of words, and still continue in any degree of apparent variance with their neighbour, when they might give proof of actual reconciliation (showing the forgiveness of the heart by the open and generous conduct of their lives)—such do not pray for pardon, but for vengeance. They call down the wrath of God on their unrelenting heads; they publicly and privately pronounce their own eternal condemnation; they actually pray, as to the spirit of their petition, after this most shocking manner: Thou, O God, hast commanded me to forgive my brother his trespasses—thou hast declared, that, unless I do so, thou wilt not forgive me my sins: well! let what will come, I am resolved to stand the hazard of it; I will not forgive, or be reconciled to my neighbour; do thou as thou pleasest with me!—Is not this saying, we cannot have offended God, in the same degree our neighbour has offended us? which is an

ingratitude, a blasphemy, and a perverseness, that must make a *Christian* shudder. From such a spirit the Lord defend all present, and every one professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Grant, holy God! that when we daily offer up the words of thy dear Son's Prayer unto thee, we may particularly dwell on the final sentence that will await us, according to the acceptance of this condition; that we may take heed to ourselves, in keeping a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man; that in what we have done wrong to others, we may use every possible method of reparation; and wherein we ourselves have been injured in thought, word, or deed by others, we may fully forgive, even as we hope to be forgiven. In this pure sense may we ever pray—*forgive us* OUR *trespasses*, AS* *we forgive those who trespass* against US; even for Christ's sake, and thy own promise sake, and through the blessed influence of thy Holy Spirit of love and peace; to whom, three Persons and one God, be ascribed, as is most due, all *honour*, *praise*, and *power*, for ever and ever. Amen.

* The word AS clearly imports, that we only desire to be forgiven in the same *degree*, or to the same *extent*, that we forgive others; and, therefore, in proportion as we fall short of being governed by the true spirit of the petition, we implicate ourselves, as deserving punishment instead of mercy, by this *very word*, which intimates a gracious *promise*, or warrants our *condemnation*.

LECTURE XLII.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.—SIXTH PETITION.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us "from evil."

JAMES, I. 13, 14.

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

THE five petitions of this Prayer, the full signification of which I have endeavoured to explain to you, are conveyed in language which admits of no manner of doubt as to their general meaning. But as the former part of this sixth petition in our Lord's Prayer seems at first sight to contain a matter of some little difficulty, from the *literal* sense of the expression—LEAD *us not into temptation*, I have, therefore, made choice of this passage of St. James's Epistle for my text, as it holds forth to

us a religious truth of the greatest importance to be believed; and also that the due consideration of it will help to remove all possible doubt as to the true meaning of the *first* part of the petition before us.

I can take no method so effectual for the informing your understanding upon this subject, as,

First, To give you a short and plain explanation of the two principal words in this part of the petition; and,

Secondly, In discoursing more fully upon the general design of it, to convince you that God cannot be *tempted with evil*, nor can he lead *us* into temptation, or suffer us to be tempted, but with the purest intention of forwarding our growth in virtue, in order to prepare us for eternal happiness.

Thirdly, To add to the confirmation of the truth of this doctrine, I shall consider the import of the concluding part of the petition, "*but deliver us from evil*," which is free from all possible mistake respecting the truth and purity of the whole petition, taken together.

To begin with the first word: to *lead*, may admit of two very opposite significations. It is used sometimes in a favourable sense, to *guide* or *conduct*; as in Psalm xxxi. 4, where the ...st calls God his *guide*, and implores him ... *him for his name's sake*. It is also em-

ployed to denote government or direction, as in Rom. viii. 14, where the Apostle thus uses it: *for, as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.* And it is sometimes used in an exceptionable sense, to express seduction, or enticing to evil, as in 2 Tim. iii. 6, where the Apostle, describing the enemies of truth, says, *Of this sort are they which creep into houses, and* LEAD *captive silly women laden with sins,* LED *away with divers lusts.* Now, in this sense, it can never be applicable to God's dealings with the sons of men, as it is joined to the word *temptation;* which word also, as it may be received in different senses, requires some further explanation.

Temptation, in general, signifies *trial,* and may be employed in a *doubtful* or in a *good* sense. It is used by the Prophet Malachi (iii. 15) in the former signification: *They that tempt God are even delivered.* And thus it is also employed by our blessed Lord, Matt. xxii. 18: *But Jesus perceiving their wickedness said, Why* TEMPT *ye me, ye hypocrites?* Again, in Acts, v. 9, St. Peter affixes the same meaning to it, when he makes the inquiry, *How is it that ye have agreed together to* TEMPT *the Spirit of the Lord?* But when the word is used in a *good* sense, it denotes generally any occasion of *proving* and making trial of a man's faith or obedience. So St. James *counts it all*

joy when we fall into divers temptations, and affirms the *man to be blessed that endureth temptation; for, when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life.* Thus God is said to have tempted Abraham (Gen. xxii. 1): *And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt* (or prove) *Abraham.* So Christ did tempt (or try) his disciple Philip (John, vi. 5), when, upon inquiring of him whence they should buy bread to feed the multitude, it is added, *And this he did to prove him* (i. e. what degree of faith he had in his power); *for he himself knew what he would do.* And in *this* sense the word may be applied to a state of *affliction* or *persecution;* for so it is sometimes used in Scripture: thus in St. Luke (viii. 13), *they who only for a while believe,* are said *to fall away in time of* TEMPTATION (or on trial of their perseverance); the conflict or struggle arising between their duty to God, their love of themselves, or the attractions of the world, being considered in the light of *temptations.* In this sense, likewise, our blessed Lord employs the word in Luke, xxii. 28: *Ye are they* (says he) *that have continued with me in my* TEMPTATION: and thus God is said, by St. Peter (2 Ep. ii. 9), to *know how to deliver the godly out of* TEMPTATIONS. But when the word is taken in an *ill* sense, to describe SUCH a *trial* as is designed to ensnare us, or draw us into sin, and, by having the word LEAD added to it, seems to carry an alarming signification, it conse-

quently furnishes a subject of proper inquiry and useful instruction, that so we may offer up this divine form of words left us by our blessed Master, in compassion to our great infirmities, with a thorough knowledge of its pure and *profitable meaning*.

In the exceptionable sense of the expression "*to be led into temptation*," it can only with truth and justice be applicable to the *devil's* design, *whose end* of tempting is thus described in many parts of Scripture: St. Paul (Gal. vi. 1) explains it as follows: *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness*, considering yourselves, lest ye also be TEMPTED. Now, as it is self-evident, that God can tempt no man to commit a *fault*, therefore *this* species of temptation belongs only to Satan, who is expressly styled the TEMPTER; and which St. Paul very fully illustrates, 1 Thess. iii. 5: *For this cause* (says he), *when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the* TEMPTER *have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.* And again, in Heb. ii. 18, he applies a remedy for such temptations in the example of Christ, *who having suffered, being tempted, is able to succour them that are tempted*, by the communications of that divine Spirit which supported himself under all the subtle and fiery attacks of the tempter, and which he laid down his life to procure for all who call

upon him for faith and grace to resist in time of *trial.*

In this sense also, every man may be said *to be tempted of his own lusts,* as the latter part of the text expresses it; and in which sense *God tempteth no man,* as St. James asserts in the former part of it.

Having now prepared your minds for what follows, by a short and plain account of the different significations of the words which form the petition, we will proceed, secondly, to a close examination of the doctrine they contain, in order that we may more thoroughly understand in what sense it is fit to pray, that *God would not lead us into temptation.*

The words of the text most clearly assert, that it is impossible that God can lead any man into temptation to *sin;* and a single just notion of the Deity prevents our even supposing such a gross contradiction, as that a Being of all purity and perfection can in any shape or degree produce such a disposition in the creature, either (1.) by secretly infusing any evil principle into his heart; or (2.) by inclining, exciting, or enticing any one to sin; for this (3.) would be little less than laying a necessity on the creature to commit it. Now, the first God cannot do, because evil can never proceed immediately from Him who is absolutely and *wholly free* from it. If evil proceeded from God, it must

of necessity cease to bear that *name, his works being all very good,* and wrought in perfect righteousness; neither (2.) can he possibly encourage any man to sin, for then he must incline men to perform the abominable thing which his soul hates. This would be secretly disposing them to that which he openly warns all from doing; the consequence of which would be, that he could not be truly offended with such persons; he could not strictly be said to punish them for their iniquities, since otherwise he must be angry with them because they obey his motions, and sentence them to endless misery because they comply with his own inclinations. And (3.) least of all, can God be said to oblige any to sin, for this implies an irresistible power over them, compelling them to do it; and, of course, the action done by virtue of the force, cannot be theirs but God's: of the truth of the CONTRARY we have an infallible monitor or testimony *within* us; for our consciences would never condemn us for sin, if we were assured we could not help it. Therefore, when we read any passages which, from the immediate letter, may carry an alarming sound, we must seriously examine their true meaning and *connexion;* we must always consider the *pure nature of God,* and the *depraved* state of our present condition; and this will

guard us from falling into error as to their spiritual meaning: *e. g.* when it is said (2 Thess. ii. 11), that *God sends a strong delusion on men, that they should believe a lie, in the same manner as he put a lying spirit into the mouths of Ahab's prophets;* or as he is said, in Jeremiah, to *deceive his people,* because he suffered them to be deceived by false prophets: in these, and all such passages, that contain any thing of doubt or difficulty in them as to the expression of LEAD *us not into temptation,* it will be always necessary for us to use the *same caution* as towards this assertion of the Apostle, which I have quoted for an example. We must examine the context (i. e. the substance of what is advanced), and all the parts which go before and follow; we must advert to the chief design of the subject in hand, the regular connexion of the argument employed. And if we only attend to the very first words of this verse (2 Thess. ii. 11), viz. the CAUSE of God's *sending a strong delusion* on a people, we shall see it accounted for from the last words of the preceding verse (10): *because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be* SAVED. So that, by men's being *led* into *such* a temptation as this, we plainly perceive a *punishment,* and not a *snare,* as the following verse more fully determines: *that*

they might all be damned, that believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness. (12.) God, we see, according to his infinite mercy, first sends them the light of *truth*, that they may be *saved*, but punishes with blindness the perverseness of all those who will *not receive it*.

The use of this doctrine, my brethren, is to convince you, that if God were to act *otherwise*, in all these cases just now specified, and which are shown to be consistent with his divine nature and perfections, he would certainly be as much the AUTHOR of sin as Satan or our own lusts can be; and we should then in vain implore him "*not to be led into temptation*," while he was disposed to do such things as would infallibly expose us to it.

Let us, therefore, examine in what respect God may be truly said to "LEAD *us into temptation*," without dishonouring his holy nature, and against which it behoves us earnestly to pray, or we may be sure Christ, who was the *wisdom of God and power of God*, would never have taught it us.

Temptations, then, as before observed, are of two kinds: such as are sent for the trial of our faith and constancy, or the improvement of our virtues, and the example or encouragement of *others*; and,

Secondly, Such as lead to sin, which are temptations of the evil spirit, suggesting evil

things to us, or raising evil notions in us, through the medium of our fleshly lusts, by which we are *drawn away*, and enticed to desire that which is forbidden.

Now, against the first, that is, bare trials, we are not supposed to pray; because, by the wisdom of Christ, they are made the *portion of all Christians;* for this world being a state of probation for another, we are taught that we must *take up our cross*, and *follow the Master.* We must *through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God.* (Acts, xiv. 22.) To these we are appointed, by the very condition of our profession; *and all who live godly*, must expect some degree of persecution from the *unbelievers* and *wicked of the world.* (2 Tim. iii. 12.) Again, this sort of temptation, or trial, is sometimes most necessary and profitable to us, into which we fall only if need be, as the Apostle expresses it (James, i. 2, 3, 4); and they are sent for the most wholesome ends, by God, to make us *partakers of his holiness, and to work in us the peaceable fruits of righteousness, unto them which are exercised thereby.* (Heb. xii. 10, 11.) It is not reasonable, therefore, that he should enjoin us to pray against those things which are so requisite for our improvement and happiness. And, accordingly, this sort of temptation is only to be prayed

against, when the things that compose it fall so heavy upon us, as to prove almost too hard for us, and incline our weak nature to make shipwreck of the faith and a good conscience. THIS affords an exercise for our faith, and dependence on God's help and grace; and this was the very case of the Thessalonians, to whom the Apostle sends to *know their faith, lest the tempter should have tempted them, and made his labour vain among them.* Against these, therefore, we are only directed to pray, as they prove strong temptations to sin, and endanger our falling into the other sort; for it is natural to conclude, that He who taught us, in the foregoing words of his Prayer, to pray for the pardon of our past sins (*"forgive us our trespasses"*), may rationally direct us to pray that we may be preserved from them in *time to come;* and this is both natural and evident, from the conclusion of the petition itself, "*deliver us from evil,*" when we are thus in danger of it, as we shall see in its proper place. We may further observe upon these words, that when we pray "*not to* "*enter into temptation,*" we cannot possibly be supposed to mean, that we expect to be entirely freed from any measure of temptation to sin; for, while we are in the flesh, this *flesh will lust against the spirit.* (Gal. v. 17.) And the Apostle assures us, that the whole life of Christians is a continual warfare against Satan and spiri-

tual wickedness (Eph. vi. 12), against the flesh (1 Pet. ii. 11), and against the ensnaring charms of this world in which we live; and, therefore, to pray to be absolutely freed from such temptations as these, is to desire to be freed from the common lot of all Christians. But in respect to these, we are to pray, that we may not be exposed to the danger of offending, that we may overcome *the sin that doth so easily beset us*, viz. that to which our constitutional disposition is most inclined; or, according to the strict letter of the petition in the Jewish phrase, *bring us not into the hand or power of temptation; but make us with the temptation a way to escape.*

In short, the pure meaning of the sixth petition is *this:* herein we pray, that God would neither suffer us, by the assaults of the devil, or by the withdrawing of his grace, or for the punishment of our sins, to be reduced to such circumstances of temptation as may prove snares or stumbling-blocks to us; but that we may always possess such a thought and sense of his protecting hand, as never to be led so far into danger, as to be overcome by the power of the temptation; and that he will be pleased to afford us such a measure of strength as may keep us from falling; or, if it be *needful* that we should fall into temptations, that he may so support us that we be not hurt by them, or, if we should

unhappily slip, that we may feel the greater necessity of God's power to save us, and enable us to stand more firmly for the future; that we may never provoke God to permit us to be *tempted* (or tried) *above what we are able to bear, but that with the temptation* (or trial) *he would make a way for us to escape, that we may be able to bear it.*

The only sense then, you see, my brethren, in which God can, with any truth and propriety, be said *to lead us into temptation*, is not by any positive act or design of his own, to hazard the constancy or happiness of his creatures, but only when, for our advancement in Christian virtues and pious fortitude, he either corrects us by the exercise of various visitations or religious trials, or when, for the punishment of our stubbornness and carelessness, he is pleased to permit our great enemy more freely to attack us in the various ways to which our weak and depraved nature subjects us without the upholding hand of his gracious help, and our constant trust in his divine promise. For to our comfort we must carefully remember, that Satan cannot tempt us at his pleasure, but only when and so far as God shall permit him; and that for God's glory, and the profit of his servants. This we see fully exemplified in the case of Job, whom Satan could not touch without God's permission, and in that of the

Apostle (Luke, xxii. 31), whom Satan desired to sift, or winnow, before he could assault him. He who could not even effect the loss of a few beasts that perish, till Christ gave him permission to enter into the swine, we may be well assured, can have no power over Christ's disciples, without leave; and this, to show them their weakness, and whom only they have to fear, and to depend upon for succour against the gates of hell itself. Thus, then, by a common liberty of speech, God is said himself to do what he suffers Satan to effect, who, when by his ministers he was permitted to destroy Job's temporal substance and comfort, it is thus expressed in submission to the Supreme Ruler of all events: *The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away* (Job, i. 21); and God himself speaks thus to Satan (ii. 3): *Thou movest me to afflict him without a cause.* Again, when Satan *tempted David to number the people,* through David's slackness and want of trust in God, he was permitted to prevail over him, in order to open his eyes to his sin against the Lord; and on this account it is said, *that the fury of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David to say, Go, number the people.* (2 Sam. xxiv. 1.) And thus, whenever we speak of the effect without strictly noticing the cause, God may be said "*to lead us into temptation,*" by permitting us to be tried in whatever way his

wisdom sees fit to grant it. All, therefore, that we can safely understand by this expression, is an humble desire that God will neither try us himself, beyond our strength (as we often tempt him to do, by our sinful presumption), nor suffer the devil, the world, or our own flesh, so far to have the mastery as to wean us from his favour. And to secure this divine help we must be uniform in the rules our Lord himself has presented to us: (1.) *to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation*, for this serious reason, that though *the spirit is willing* (to help), *the flesh is weak:* in applying for or using it, (2.) to take heed, because it is the natural lot of our present state to be tried, or tempted, and yet not to faint, because *no temptation shall take us, but what is common to man; and that God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able* (if we trust in him for help), according to the declaration of St. John, in Rev. iii. 10, that *whosoever keepeth the word of his patience, he also will keep them from the hour of temptation;* not from being wholly tempted (for that will come upon all the *world, to try them that dwell upon the earth)*, but from the power of it that it shall not hurt them.

With a due impression, therefore, of our own weakness and unworthiness, we pray further in these words, that, if it be God's will, we may not

be exposed to any *great* temptations at all; but if, for any ends of his wise providence, he shall be pleased to suffer us to be tempted, according to the instance just mentioned, of king David's numbering the people, as recorded in 2 Sam. xxiv. 1, and in 1 Chron. xxi. 1; and the trials of Job; that then he would mercifully vouchsafe to strengthen and support us under the temptations, and carry us through them with innocence and integrity; and, especially, not so far to desert us, as to suffer them to hurry us into wilful sin, but to give us grace to attend to the exhortations of his holy Apostle St. Peter (1 Ep. v. 8), *to be sober and vigilant, because our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may be permitted to devour; and whom we are commanded to resist, by continuing steadfast in the faith; knowing that some afflictions* (or *temptations*, as they are here called) *are accomplished in our brethren that are in the world;* but to build on this hope continually, *that the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that we have suffered awhile, will make us perfect, stablish, strengthen, and settle us.*

Having been so very full and particular in the explanation of this part of the *sixth* petition of the Lord's Prayer, it being so essential for every Christian *clearly to understand it*, I

shall have less occasion to say much upon these concluding words, "*but deliver us from "evil.*"—The *general* import of this petition is a prayer against every thing hurtful both to soul and body; and hence, also, it may be received in a double acceptation, as signifying either an evil person or an evil thing. In the former point of view, it may not only respect all wicked men (as instruments of evil to us), but especially the *wicked* ONE, the ruler and employer of these instruments; or, as he is called, Matt. iv. 3, the TEMPTER; who is the author of all sin and wickedness, and, as before so abundantly shown, the scourge of those who do evil; as also the occasional limited chastiser of those who become objects of correction. But if we confine these words—*deliver us from evil*, as relating to what we usually term misfortune or temporal calamity; then it does not so much respect the evil of sin itself, as the evil of temptation, to which it seems most properly to refer, according to this prayer of Christ to God for his preservation of the Apostles (John, xvii. 15), *And I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil;* that is, the danger of it, the *temptations* it abounds with, and every thing that may weaken their faith, or render them comfortless under their

necessary trials, of which they must have their share as long as they continue in it.

To conclude: We may sum up the short and plain meaning of this petition in the expressive language of a pious Prelate of our own church—"*O God and Father, who hatest iniquity and knowest our infirmities, leave us not to the malice and power of the evil one; let not the devil deal with us as he pleases; neither leave us to ourselves, and to our own corrupt hearts and lusts, lest we rashly run into* TEMPTATION; *but keep us, good Lord, out of the way of them, and always under the direction of thy Holy Spirit. Suffer us not to be surprised by them, nor tempted above what we are able to bear, but give us grace to withstand them, by being always on our* GUARD; *that is, to watch and pray daily, lest we fall.*" In this pure interpretation, let us all henceforth constantly petition God, *not to lead us into temptation,* but that he will most graciously *deliver us from evil,* and that for *His* sake, *who taught us thus to pray;* and to whom, as we are indebted for all we have power to do or hope for, to him, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons and one God, be all the praise for ever and ever. Amen.

LECTURE XLIII.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.—CONCLUSION.

" For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the " glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

1 TIMOTHY, I. 17.

Now, unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

ST. Jude, with very little alteration of this text, supplies equally appropriate language to introduce the subject of the *doxology*, or concluding part of the Lord's Prayer: *To the only wise God our Saviour be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.*

By *doxology* * is meant the form of giving

* The above word is taken from the Greek language, signifying literally, to *speak* or give *praise*: it is a compound, and forms a verse or short hymn, anciently appointed in the church, and used as the conclusion of our Lord's Prayer, *for thine is the kingdom*, &c. in the same manner as ascribing due honour to the Almighty in the *Gloria Patri* after the *Psalms*. The latter words are taken from the Latin

glory, and praise, and honour to Almighty God, according to the example afforded in the foregoing texts, and as it is still more fully expressed in 1 Chron. xxix. 11—13, in almost the very words of the Prayer itself—*Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord! and thou art exalted as head above all: now, therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name.*

As the Prayer opens with an universal acknowledgment of God's high relation to us, in the title of OUR FATHER, and of the glorious residence of his sacred Majesty by the words, WHO ART IN HEAVEN; so it closes with a corresponding propriety in giving him every title that can best describe his perfect nature and supreme authority. This, from the passages already produced, we see was always the custom of holy men in the conclusion of their respective acts of religious service to the Almighty; and from similar passages in St. John's Revelations, it seems to be the practice of the saints above, as well as on this earth: for we are there told, that *the angels that stood about God's throne, and the*

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language, and translated, Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; thus acknowledging the doctrine and the union of divine Persons in the ever adorable Trinity.

elders, whose number was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen. Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing, for ever and ever. Amen.

In the instruction that I have prepared for you at this time, my brethren, I will first consider the design of this kind of conclusion, with the beautiful relation of all its parts, and its fitness to encourage our devotion, and which we may reasonably suppose induced our blessed Lord to add it to his Prayer (Matt. vi. 13): but as it does not always appear to follow the form of the Prayer in the *original of all the Gospels* in which it is recorded, I will,

Secondly, afford you a few short and profitable reasons for this seeming omission, in order that my endeavour towards every necessary information you might require on this subject, may prove as perfect as possible.

First, then, as nothing can be more proper than that all our addresses to God should close with an act of thanksgiving, according to the solemn rules just now presented, the form of this conclusion does very fully declare that we

own God's supreme dominion over all things, as likewise his power and will to do above all that we can ask or think. It shows us that all the religious service we pay to God, whether we pray to him, confess to him, give thanks, or whatever we perform, we ought to do with a view to *God's glory*. This is an essential doctrine, and abundantly established by the example of all the Apostles. St. Paul admonishes us (1 Cor. x. 31), that, *whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, it should be all done to the glory of God:* we should have continually before us our absolute obligation to, and dependence upon him, and that we are only made to be instruments of his glory and service. And in Col. iii. 17, he repeats the exhortation, with a very necessary addition to all Christians, that, *whatsoever we do, in word or deed, we should do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by him;* that is, by acknowledging his blessed Son to be the grand cause of our creation, and the ability of our doing any thing acceptable to God, or profitable to our own best interests, viz. the salvation of our souls: and to the expediency of this practice, no less than to the truth of the precept, St. Peter assents, recommending with equal force, and some useful variation, that, *if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God;* that is, let him govern all his instruction by the

spirit of the Gospel. *If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability that God giveth;* that is, let him ascribe his sufficiency to the undeserved gift of God's grace, and not to his own mere strength, or any unassisted purity of his own natural inclination: and the reason is indispensable, says the Apostle—*because that thereby God in all things may be* GLORIFIED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, who hath glorified the Father through his *obedience*, by the glory which the Father hath given him—to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Pet. iv. 11.)

We may further most reasonably suppose, that this form of conclusion was added by our Saviour, to keep alive in our minds a due sense, not only of the great necessity we have to pray to God for all those things that are before specified in the Prayer, but as a matter of a valuable support; since, by dwelling habitually upon the gracious *goodness*, mighty *power*, and uncontrollable *sovereignty* of the Almighty, we shall be daily encouraged to expect a certain notice of every suitable request from the hands of Him to whom we apply for these several blessings. And as the reason for our indulging frequent regard of God's universal dominion and just right to our humblest homage, cannot be described in more sublime words than those of the 96th Psalm, ver. 7, 8, 9, 10, I shall close

this part of my subject with that very applicable portion of it: *Ascribe unto the Lord, O ye kindreds, worship and power; ascribe unto the Lord the honour due unto his name: bring presents, and come into his courts. O, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; let the whole earth stand in awe of him. Tell it out among the heathen, that the Lord he is King; and that it is he who hath made the round world so fast, that it cannot be moved; and that he shall judge the people righteously.*

From this description of the sacred Person we approach in prayer, and with which the words of this doxology so truly correspond, we are most plainly taught our duty in this respect — that we ought to ask these things of God on this very account; because, as he is the King of the whole world *(for the kingdom is the Lord's, and he is the Governor among the people,* Psa. xxii. 28), so ought he to be applied to by all his creatures. Again, by reason he is also the POWER, and is able both to hear and answer our petitions; therefore of him it is more fit to desire whatever we stand in need of, according to the pious acknowledgment of the obedient King Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. xx. 6), who thus exclaimed, with holy faith, in the house of the Lord: *O Lord God of our fathers, art not thou the God of heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the hea-*

then? and in thy hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? And, lastly, because God is the GLORY of all our solemn and needful applications to him—because that is the end of all things which are or were created—because a study of this glory is part of the creature's obedience and reverence, which can belong to God alone, the worship which peculiarly raises and distinguishes him above the creature; therefore to him only ought we to make our prayer, and not to any other.

The next thing we are taught by this doxology, or concluding form of humble praise, as being of the greatest importance to our happiness in this uncertain and trying state, is the *truth* of the confession it contains, which certainly contributes to encourage hope that we shall receive what we are commanded by Christ to pray for. Since our faith is hereby strengthened in the profession of his ability to grant what we desire; and, further, as the things we ask are expressly dictated to us by the words of his own wisdom, and so highly add to his own honour to bestow, as well as our real advantage to receive, we have the strongest possible assurance to believe we shall receive them, and that nothing will prevent it, but the insincerity of our address.

Again, the value of this particular form of

finishing our supplications to the Throne of Grace, is rendered more conspicuous by the very manner of our enumerating the several excellencies therein declared to belong to God; for, it conveys throughout, a due and humiliating character of all created power, compared with the perfections of the Supreme; it plainly magnifies them beyond what they are or can be, in any one besides. It agrees with every lofty address and humbling confession of the most pious saints and prophets, and speaks the very language of the holy Daniel (ii. 37), *Thou, O king, art a king of kings; for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, strength, and glory.* By this comparison we are both discouraged from depending upon men, and relieved from fear of disappointment; for these words suggest to us, that, though others may have authority, it is all derived from HIM who is SUPREME—King over all the earth, and which he rules at his pleasure. Though others may have power, *God* only is ALMIGHTY: nor can they exert their power to hurt us, without his permission; and if they have grace to do us good, to the bounty of his providence we are directed, by this comparison, to ascribe it. Others, likewise, may have glory, that is, a majesty and honour justly suitable to their station in the world, according to the appointment of the Supreme Director: but to *God only* be-

longs the excellency of *divine honour and worship*. To him must the highest bow; *for he can pluck the mighty from their seat, and exalt the humble and meek*. To him only is prayer and religious invocation to be made; he alone is capable of receiving it to any purpose; and none but he can justly claim it.

All that remains on this most essential part of the subject, is to afford a short exposition of the words, "FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN." By which is signified to us, that as these *divine* perfections and prerogatives did always belong to God, so will they always continue to do so, in the peculiar manner we have described. And to this our tribute of incumbent praise we add AMEN, to testify our full assent and pure belief of what we have advanced, according to the custom of the Apostles, who usually close their epistles, and religious exercises, with this same word: (2 Tim. iv, 18), *The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work* (saith St. Paul), *and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.* And again: (Phil. iv. 23), *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.* The word itself impresses both wish and approbation; i. e. So BE IT—or, THUS MAY IT HAPPEN, and signifies our *assent* to that which went before, with an earnest desire of its accomplishment: and to this end it is employed throughout God's holy

word, in the Old as well as in the New Testament. So that when we take its several significations together, it is as much as if we should say, God grant what I have prayed for; and so I trust he will do, of his mercy towards me, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

To render your information as complete as possible, concerning whatever relates to the history and meaning of the holy Prayer our blessed Lord has left us, I shall proceed to answer a few objections that have been made respecting this *doxology*, or concluding form of *praise*.

As it would answer no useful end to *you*, to enter into learned arguments, or tire you with various authorities on both sides the question, it will be sufficient for all the profit you can receive from this part of the subject, barely to mention the objections alluded to; and to show clearly and briefly, that they are of no material consequence, which way soever they are decided, as to the essentials of the religious benefit to be derived from praying in the manner our Lord has taught and commanded us.

In my first Lecture on this blessed form of words, I gave you some plain and short reasons to prove, that our Lord intended his Prayer both as a pattern for us to make our prayers by, and

as a *positive form* for us to use; and I reserved the reasons objected against the latter opinions for this place, because the occasional omission of this doxology in the Prayer, is the grand argument advanced against its being intended as a set form; for, if it had been so intended, it is not likely, say the objectors, that Christ would have added the doxology at one time, as it is written in St. Matthew, and omitted it in St. Luke. That the Prayer so stands in these different Gospels cannot be denied; and if the clear and forcible argument advanced in a former Lecture, is not sufficient to demonstrate that it should be used as a *set form* of prayer by all the followers of Christ, some other observations may perhaps be necessary to confirm it. I must here repeat, therefore, that, in immediate compliance with the disciples' request to Jesus to teach them *how to pray, as John had also taught his disciples*, he delivered the words of this Prayer, expressly bidding them, *When ye pray, say, Our Father*, &c. concluding the Prayer at that time with the doxology. Nothing but an evil spirit of prejudice and perverseness can except to the plain unequivocal meaning of these words, which alone are abundantly decisive to establish our blessed Lord's design respecting the general use of this Prayer.

In answer to the objection made to the *doxology* not being added in both parts of

Scripture where the Prayer is written, it will be necessary to observe, that the learned are divided in their opinions, whether the doxology in St. Matthew belongs to the original text or not; that is, whether it was any part of our Saviour's *Prayer*. They ground their reasons why it is not, on the fact of its being left out in the Gospel written by St. Luke, and also in many *copies* of that written by St. Matthew. On the other hand it is certain, that many copies of St. Matthew *have* it, and it has been expounded likewise as a *part* of it by the Greek Fathers of the church. Now, whichever opinion is right, neither of them disproves our Lord's intention to transmit these words as a *regular form of prayer*, or that they should not be thus employed. For, if the doxology is not considered a part of the original words delivered by our Lord, that can be no ground for any objection against the general Prayer being received as a *set form*, because, as to the *six* petitions of the Prayer, they are the same in one Evangelist as in the other, as to the SENSE of them; and though one or two expressions may *differ* in our language, yet the language in which our Lord delivered them, will admit of some similar signification *.

* It would be quite unprofitable to enter into perplexing guments with persons manifestly discontented about points

All that is materially necessary to be noticed at this time, respecting the doxology, or concluding form of general praise, being at one time omitted and at another time used, is, that though our Lord commanded this use of the Lord's Prayer, he does not insist on the adoption of the doxology, but leaves it as a matter of discretion to be added or omitted, as occasion may warrant the propriety of either practice. And the custom of our Church seems governed by the same good judgment in this respect, as in most of her offices and decisions; for, by using the Prayer both ways, she steers clear of all error: she uses it with the doxology the *first* time it is presented in the public service, because the office is *there* a matter of PRAISE, and therefore the doxology *very applicable*; but since she finds it sometimes left out in Scripture, she omits it in some places of her service, where the subject of the worship is not an act of *direct* thanksgiving. In answering these objections, therefore, which this portion of my subject has necessarily led me to notice, you have the reasons given for the

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of no moment; who grasp at the shadow, and let go the substance. The test of true faith and strict piety is to reverence and follow all that Christ has left us for our *rule*, and not to be disputing about every insignificant distinction, which, instead of advancing pure religion in ourselves, tends only to hurt the general cause, and supplies matter of cavil to the profane and sceptical objector.

different manner of repeating the Lord's Prayer in our church, for which, perhaps, you could not account before.

After all, we may rest this conclusion on a candid judgment, viz. whether it would not be an act of the greatest *absurdity* and *disobedience* to decline the use of the *whole Prayer*, because the latter part of it seems not to be positively required to be constantly added to the rest.

Though matter of controversy or dispute is what I have carefully avoided in all my instructions to you in these Lectures, as being more likely to perplex than to profit you, yet this point being an article of some consequence for every member of our excellent Establishment to understand, and occasionally defend, I could not, without submitting to a manifest deficiency in my task, omit this plain state of the case respecting our Lord's authority for *set forms* of prayer, grounded upon his own *positive* example in leaving us this form, and commanding his Apostles and other disciples to use it *as* such. Nor can we doubt, that they observed this command, since all the accounts we have from the earliest ages of Christianity, fully prove it to have been their CONSTANT CUSTOM.

Having now afforded you, according to my best judgment, whatever information seemed necessary upon the contents of this very com-

prehensive form of words, and delivered the same in a very full and plain manner, in eight particular Lectures, I cannot close this part of my task more properly, than by addressing the Almighty in a short paraphrase or comment on the *whole Prayer*. OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN; i. e. Look upon us, O heavenly Father, as *poor, weak, ignorant, froward*, and *helpless* children, and pity us according to thy goodness, for Jesus Christ's sake, the Son of thy love.—HALLOWED BE THY NAME. O that we, and all thy servants, may give the Lord the honour due unto his name, which is *great, wonderful*, and *holy*.—THY KINGDOM COME; take possession of our hearts, thou King of heaven, and subdue whatever is *amiss* in us.—THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN. O grant us a light to *see*, a desire to *choose*, and a power to *do thy will in all things*.—GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD; afford us grace, to be content and thankful for our present condition, to which, as sinners, we have no right. Thou, O heavenly Father, knowest what we have need of; we cast all our care on thee, for thou carest for us: may we seek thy kingdom, and the righteousness thereof, which is the needful food of our SOULS.—AND FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES, AS WE FORGIVE THEM THAT TRESPASS AGAINST US. Vouchsafe us grace to imitate thy goodness, that we may *forgive*, and *give*, and

love, as becomes the disciples of Jesus Christ: —and LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL. May we never provoke thee to withdraw thy needful help, nor permit us to be tempted above what we are able to bear; leave us not to *ourselves* and our own *choice*, nor let our faith fail us in the day of temptation and trial.—FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, THE POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOR EVER AND EVER, AMEN. To thee, O King of heaven, we have now prayed; on thee we *depend*, for thou only hast *power* to help and defend us. To thee, therefore, we give the glory of all the blessings we enjoy or hope for, both *temporal* and *spiritual*, in *this* world, or in the world to come; and that through Jesus Christ our Saviour. To whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, blessed for evermore, be all the praise and power ascribed by men and angels. Amen, Amen.

LECTURE XLIV.

"What desirest thou of God in this Prayer?"
"I desire my Lord God, our heavenly Father,"
&c.

MATTHEW, XXI. 22.

All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

WHEN I entered upon this public task, I proposed affording you the fullest information upon *every part* of our Church Catechism; and as the nature of PRAYER, and the great benefit of our duty in exercising it, cannot be too well understood or too earnestly enforced, I have judged it for your advantage to deliver another general Lecture upon this important subject. Before I proceed, therefore, to that explanation of the Catechism which treats of the nature and number of the Holy Sacraments, it may render my plan more perfect, to take notice of that part of the Catechism which

immediately follows the rehearsal of the Lord's Prayer.

I think it may fairly be asserted, that as, of all the abridged or short forms of instruction concerning the faith and practice of any particular church or society of Christians, none will be found superior either in scriptural orthodoxy, or in plain and comprehensive information, to this Catechism of our own Church; so, of all the comments upon the Lord's Prayer that were ever produced, perhaps none can be found more expressive of its particular meaning, and affording, at the same time, a more perfect description of the design and end of prayer in general, than these words upon which I am about to enlarge at present.

That the Christian scholar may be supplied with a competent knowledge of the sense of the holy Prayer he has just repeated, our Catechism proceeds to this very necessary inquiry concerning the religious improvement to be derived from duly understanding the different parts of the Prayer: "*What desirest thou of God in this* "*Prayer?*"

To which the answer is equally short and plain with all the others: "*That he therein de-* "*sires our Lord God, our heavenly Father, who* "*is the giver of all goodness, to send his grace* "*upon us, and upon all people,* (to this end) "*that we may worship him, serve him, and obey*

" *him as we ought to do.* We further *pray unto*
" *God, that he would send us all things that be*
" *needful both for our souls and bodies; and*
" *that he will be merciful unto us, and forgive*
" *us our sins; and that it will please him to save*
" *and defend us from all dangers ghostly and*
" *bodily; and that he will keep us from all sin*
" *and wickedness, and from our ghostly enemy,*
" *and from everlasting death: and this we trust*
" *he will do of his mercy and goodness, through*
" *our Lord Jesus Christ; for which reason we*
" *add, Amen, or, So be it.*"

The method I shall pursue in discoursing to you on these words, will be to point out how aptly they are applied to the different parts of the Prayer itself; and to illustrate each, according to the natural observations which present themselves upon a religious review of them: by which kind of meditation I trust it will appear to every attentive and serious person, *that all things whatsoever we should ask in prayer,* are contained in that answer, and that we need only the grace of faith to believe, in order that we may receive them.

In the first place, by acknowledging *the Lord God* to be our *heavenly* Father, the mind is duly prepared to put up the petitions that follow, with becoming reverence and dependence; whereby the service of our prayer is better qualified for God's acceptance. In the words of

this address we likewise confess our great insufficiency of ourselves, for any thing that is good, which lays the foundation of humility, the most necessary of all Christian virtues: and under conviction of this condition by nature, we are naturally led to pray for God's grace, that is, such a degree of assistance, through the influence of his Holy Spirit, as will incline us to cultivate those tempers of mind, and practise such daily devotions, as may enable us to *worship him and obey him as we ought to do.* For, if our service is not performed according to the precepts of his holy word, and the direction of his good Spirit, it is certain it will not be acceptable to God, neither consequently can it profit us: *for, being by nature children of wrath,* and disposed to evil continually, it is only in proportion to our sense of these infirmities, that we shall offer any perfect homage to our heavenly Father. If we expect to make any essential advances in religious improvement without God's aid, we shall find ourselves most grievously disappointed—for we are all *unprofitable servants,* as far as we work by our own mere natural will, independent of divine support: for, as this will is carnal and worldly, and savoureth not the things of God, so it will always incline us to ask the things that are most agreeable to sensual enjoyment; and, instead of being more and more confirmed that our great-

est wisdom and best interest, is to *set our affections on things above*, we shall continually be actuated by the ruling principle of our mortal nature, to covet the things of this life, and neglect the most enduring riches. To correct as much as possible this inherent principle of our fallen nature, which will lead us to study self-love more than God's glory, we are here invited to solicit, first, the grace of God, to pray that his kingdom may be formed in our hearts, that we may see the blessing and necessity of being inheritors thereof; or, in other words, to seek first his righteousness, the power of pleasing him, and then to exercise our faith in his never-failing promise, *that all other needful things shall be added unto us*. And to render our prayers still more agreeable to the Christian rule, we are enjoined to petition Heaven, not only for this necessary grace to each person's private benefit, as he feels the need of it, but to put up a prayer of universal charity, that God would send it also upon all his people, as well as to ourselves. By this habitual exercise of good will to all mankind, the heart becomes enlarged from harbouring selfish preference, and is better prepared to make such vows, and ask such things, as will materially prosper us.—Having recommended the introduction of this service, by imploring a suitable spirit to the work, we may proceed securely to pray to

God our *heavenly Father*, to send us a necessary supply of daily bread; and as it is here most justly expressed, in the words before us, "*all* "*things that be needful both for our souls and* "*bodies*:" for, as before observed in the Lecture upon these particular words, the essential nourishment we daily stand in need of, does not consist *alone* of bodily food, raiment, or any other worldly comforts, but that supply of grace and strength to carry on our spiritual warfare, which is needful to prepare us for a life of glory, whenever this short, vain, and perishing scene is over; and continually to keep in mind this invigorating truth, *that as man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God*, that is, by the successive and kind appointments of his providence, and the wise rule of his supreme will; so, however successful all these things may prove to us, according to our fond judgment of prosperity, yet if we lack a valuable proportion of the *one thing needful*, if we are not alive to our blessed Master's precept and example, that *our meat and drink should be to do the will of God in all things*, all the other successes will profit us but little, if any thing, in the end. Thus, if we are in affluence, we must be possessed of grace to use it well, i. e. to the honour and praise of God. If we are visited with affliction, we must experience the grace of resignation and submis-

sion. In all cases, and in all conditions, we must consider ourselves as instruments in God's hands to promote his chief glory; so shall we gradually become prepared for admittance into the inheritance of the saints of light.

In the illustration of the particular passages of the Prayer before us, I may with propriety indulge a further view of this most gracious remedy of prayer, under every trial that can befall us, or render us uneasy. Prayer is, without dispute, the sovereign balsam for both temporal and spiritual evil. We find it not only the constant practice of Christ himself as an indispensable exercise of his ministry, and recommended to his disciples as an antidote to spiritual mischief of every kind—*(Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation)*; but it was the very remedy he applied himself, in the most grievous trials and temptations that ever were, or ever can be, endured in our nature. In the agonies of his bitterest passion, he employed no other means of comfort but that of *prayer*; and his prayer, we read, was perfectly demonstrative of his sufferings; for, praying and *being in an agony, he sweat as it were great drops of blood*. This example should urge us, under our severest troubles, doubts, and despondencies, to fervent humble prayer. In this we are sure to find relief; and if this fails,

we can place confidence in nothing else. Two angels are represented as comforting our blessed Master in his memorable conflict with the horrors that set themselves in array before him. He will not do less for all who trust in him, than he experienced from his heavenly Father's love, to whose high will he was in all things faithful. He still sits at his right hand to intercede for all who come unto him for pardon and assistance. Into their hands he will most assuredly pour the balm of cheering hope, whenever they are assaulted by temptation, or wounded by the misgivings of a tender conscience.

This is so essential a doctrine to be enforced upon the contrite and broken-hearted, that you will naturally account for my being particular upon it. Without this blessed remedy of prayer, Christians would, of all other people, be most miserable: for, in this life of sorrow, trial, and imperfection, to what daily miseries are we not exposed? Allow me, then, to dwell a little longer on its advantages, whether under temptation or spiritual despondency.

It is by the spirit of prayer alone, that both these occasional and unavoidable evils of our present state can either be corrected or subdued.

How innumerable are our temptations both from within and without, both from the male-

volence of our subtle and bitter enemy, and from our own weak and disordered nature! When we think we have gained some little victory over the world, the devil, and the flesh, God only needs to subject us to some unlooked-for trial, and we immediately discover our inability to stand our ground without his help; so needful is it for us to beg most earnestly "*not to* "*be led into temptation;*" i. e. not to be exposed to trials above our strength, and to guard against *the sin that doth most easily beset us;* for we never know how closely we are attached to this earth, out of which our bodies were originally formed, until our eyes are opened to see the fatal consequences of the attachment. Whether, then, we are assailed by the flattering prospects of ambition, by the lust of power, by the captivating snares of pleasure, or by any other worldly allurements, let us not listen to the temptation, *charm it never so sweetly.* Let us instantly make a *pause;* lift up our hands in prayer: the more bewitching the assault, the more importunate must be our petitions for power to resist it. Nothing but doubt of our own strength, and prayer for help, can save us. Now, one positive proof of the mischievous tendency of such temptations is this: if they effect a slackness in our pious pursuits—if they raise an envious regret in our desires—if they seem to take an almost irresistible possession of

our thoughts—if they render us indifferent about serious concerns, which gave us pleasure before this interception, then we may be sure we are *in danger*. We have only one resource, and that is *prayer*. The Christian profession, my brethren, is a continual warfare. As our adversary is represented as a roaring lion seeking whom he may be permitted to devour, so it warns us to use the sword of the Spirit against his attacks; and if we ask this in Christ's name, we need never fear sufficient armour will be at hand to defend us. But there is one precaution very necessary to be attended to; and that is, not to suffer the tempter to gain ground by our favouring the temptation: the sooner we throw ourselves into a posture of defence, the better able we shall be to withstand the snare. Instant prayer, therefore, must be applied, when we are conscious all goes not right within us, the signs of which revolt I have just now given you. In the ordinary course of things, we are liable to hourly and unforeseen assaults of the above description; and though we cannot always fall upon our knees in the moment of attack, or utter formal and devout expressions to counteract their influence, yet the prayer of the heart is ever at hand to befriend our conflicts; mental supplication to the throne of grace may be presented in the very moment of the most pressing necessities; and when we are retired, and have

opportunity, it is then our duty to renew our prayers in humble and fervent supplication for continuance of favour; to examine the nature of the danger we have encountered, and be grateful for the mercy of the escape.—In short, and to conclude this head: however urgent the love of this world—however violent occasional temptation to return into its bosom—however mortifying and vexatious the experience of various disappointments to our temporal splendour or convenience; we may rest assured of this consoling truth, that while we sincerely *mind our prayers*, resolve all events into the mystery of God's providence, and strive to be content with that provision he has allotted us, living in a manner always in his presence, and directing all our actions to the purpose of his glory; while we have grace to do this, my brethren, we need fear no essential evil—*all will end well* with us at last.

2. I will now proceed to offer a few short and plain observations upon the mighty benefit and indispensable *duty* of prayer, under the second situation I specified, namely, the truly lamentable state of spiritual despondency. If, by God's blessing on my endeavours, I am enabled to afford one drop of comfort to any thus afflicted, great will be my rejoicing. As the attempt, however, is purely Christian, and the whole power of the remedy ascribed to HIM

from whom alone true peace can flow, we may humbly hope success.—This is a bitter potion, with which the very best of Christians have, in God's wisdom, been sometimes presented. Of this truth, however, I believe there never was a doubt: but, generally speaking, wherever the mind is subject to a deplorable despondency, some bodily complaint assists and aggravates the disorder and its dreadful and inexpressible sensations. But as we are taught to believe, that (wickedness excepted) every thing that befalls us, is under the direction or permission of God's appointment, even this united calamity becomes a still more proper subject of our *prayers*. The greater reason, therefore, there is to believe this to be the case of any particular person, the more naturally we are led to distinguish the disorders, and try them separately. If bodily maladies have unhappily any influence to perplex a weak judgment, the first object should be to endeavour to cure the body, and then our reason will be more capable of receiving the lessons of religion. But it sometimes happens, that the disorder is seated principally in the *mind*, either in consequence of ignorance, perplexing doubts, a naturally weak judgment, and even perhaps a tender conscience united: in this case, we must have recourse to *religious argument*, assisted by the fervent and

unremitted prayers of the unhappy sufferers *themselves*.

I will for the present consider the disorder in two points of view: first, as it is a symptom that rather discovers a favourable state, than any thing to be seriously dreaded; and secondly, as, by the improper yielding to these imaginary fears, it may become a very great sin, and a temptation that cannot be too much resisted.

To satisfy ourselves in the truth of the first remark, let us attend to the causes of any religious burden on the mind. Now, these we shall always find to be the same: (1.) such a dread of having offended God, as makes us suppose we are wholly incapable of his favour; (2.) a natural sorrow attending this fear, which paints to us the impossibility of ever making amends for our past offences. Let the disconsolate take courage, even under this seemingly alarming state of mind: for, what do these very feelings show us, but that of ourselves we are unworthy of any favour, of *ourselves* we are insufficient for any good? and consequently they lead us to put our whole trust in the *all-sufficient atonement* by our blessed Saviour, the *blood of Jesus Christ*, who died to save the *worst of sinners* that truly trust in HIM, and further to depend upon the *power* he has promised (to all who apply in his *name* for it) of becoming vessels fitted for his mercy. The *means*, then,

to confirm us in this faith, and procure sufficient strength to remove these *doubts*, and establish our hope of salvation, is PRAYER—earnest and *incessant prayer*. We must not, therefore, be cast down at any occasional visitations of this kind, but diligently employ our reason in the study of the Scriptures, wherein is sure ground of hope to all who truly turn to God. *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden* (with the burden of your sins), *and I will refresh you*, saith Christ. *If ye repent and turn from the evil of your ways, though your sins were as scarlet, they shall become white as snow; though deep as crimson, they shall be as wool.* Again: let the mournful take comfort in that the very regret that they are not what they should be, argues a wish that they were better than they are. And that bare wish is a proof that grace is sown in the heart, that the work of redemption is *begun* in them. It is an argument of *contrition* and self-accusation, and has this sure promise attending it, that the humble and contrite, *God will in no wise cast out.* There is this further proof in favour of such mourners, that this is not the method the wilful sinner and the reprobate ever discover; the remorse they feel, hurries them on to all manner of wickedness. Lastly, upon the persuasion that God allows nothing to befall those who desire to serve him, but for their good; instead of doubting

of our state, we should consider such kind of visitations as wholesome trials to show us to ourselves, to cure us of presumption. We cannot be too cautious of indulging ourselves in expecting more positive assurances than God has any where afforded us in his holy word. The very best are sinners; and to expect such direct marks of final favour as some boast, and more fancy they possess, leaves no room for faith and humble penitence. *Search the Scriptures*, my brethren; there you will find undoubted marks of being accepted: they are these—*deep sorrow* for *past* sins, such as shows the necessity of forsaking them, such as stirs us up to throw them off; consciousness that we need a power besides our own to help us, a dependence on God's *mercy through Christ*. The more we fear for ourselves, the more we shall depend upon him. All such persons must think often of St. Paul's case: he had doubts that he was not sufficiently favoured, or quite in the right way, because he was not sufficiently perfect. If Satan were not allowed to buffet us sometimes, we should be in danger from a still worse disease than this I am now prescribing for:—SPIRITUAL PRIDE would certainly be our ruin. The Lord therefore did not listen to the Apostle's doubts and fears on this occasion, but taught him a much better lesson than if he had complied with his request: *My grace is suffi-*

cient for thee (says he); do not be puffed up with these fond and flattering assurances, but cultivate a sound faith in HIM *who is able to save,* and will deliver the vilest sinner that turns to him in time, and believes in his never-failing promises. Such persons would do well to remember our Lord's communication to St. Peter—*Satan desired that he might sift him like wheat;* that is, put his faith to the utmost test, as he did that of holy Job; *but I have prayed for thee* (says Christ). All, then, that they can do who find themselves thus distressed, is to implore their Saviour *to pray for them,* and to pray *themselves,* for strength to bear up against all the manifold infirmities to which their own flesh is heir. We cannot fail to know for certain, whether we are ashamed of sin, whether we are afraid of its sad consequences, whether we desire to please God, and whether we are convinced of the only method of doing it; namely, through the blessing of his grace: these are all assurances of our *conversion*—of his *favour*—and that we are in the way of advancing from *grace to grace.* We must console ourselves that we are under the direction of his wise care, as much in spiritual concerns as temporal. We must always strive to do the best we can, never to resist good motions, nor abuse his gifts: we must leave all the rest in humble faith to HIM, building on this firm hope, that He who brought

us into being out of nothing, who has long preserved us, undeserving as we are, who has done so much for us in unveiling to us our errors, and helping us to amend, and show forth *some fruits of repentance*, will never leave us nor *forsake us*, but will prepare us for a still better scene, and provide us a situation, wherein we shall be able to record his glory to endless ages. In short, *we must praise him for all that is past, and trust him for all that's to come.*

On the contrary, to despair of God's mercy, because we are not yet so perfect as many, or as perhaps we might have been, had we duly applied the means afforded us, is surely a very great sin, and attended with infinite danger to our souls. It is the last fatal snare Satan spreads in the way of those who have most *need of a Redeemer:* for, to despair at the sight of our own wretchedness, is not humility, but the most abominable kind of pride. It is lowering the merit of Christ's sacrifice, destroying the efficacy of his grace and power, and to set up a plea of just reward for what we do, instead of leaning wholly on God's mercy, under the strict religious conviction, that though we should have done all that God hath commanded us, we are still but unprofitable servants: whereas, if we would obtain *such* an assurance as will *never* fail us, *that peace of God which passeth all understanding*, we must entirely distrust our-

selves, our own attainments and abilities, in order that we may owe our cure to God alone; and, therefore, though he may for a time withdraw the cheering influence of his favour, and leave us to the leanness of our own unassisted hope, we must still submit to the method of cure he pleases to appoint: we must conclude there is good reason, even for this solitary, gloomy state of mind, and persist in *prayer*, that he will not lay more on us than we can bear, but that, in his good time, he will shine again upon our hearts with the bright beams of his healing love, and resolutely maintain, with the humble and faithful Job, *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.* Let us ever remember that nothing befalls us but for our final happiness; *that* HE *can soon wipe all tears from our eyes.* Under every oppression, then, of mind, under every fear, under every doubt, how grievous soever to be borne, let us continually say, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.* This will defeat the utmost malice and artifice of the enemy, who thinks he can more easily prevail upon us to desert the Rock of our salvation, whenever the hand of God is heavy upon us for our punishment, or the advancement of our faith. Let us then dismiss all vain fears, my brethren, trusting in this *eternal* truth, *that He who is for us, is stronger than he that is against us,* and will

abundantly deliver all who call upon him in their trouble, and that for the sake of Jesus Christ his Son our Lord. *In that sure rock and castle of our defence is all our hope.* May we all be found in HIM, *both at the hour of death and in the day of judgment:* and that we may not be disappointed of a blessed interest in his love, let us continually employ the remedy of PRAYER, not wavering in our *faith*, but steadfastly believing that he will surely bless the remedy HE HIMSELF hath appointed.

Now, &c.

LECTURE XLV.

OF THE NATURE AND NUMBER OF THE SACRAMENTS:

WITH A SHORT VIEW OF THE FIVE POPISH SACRAMENTS.

EXODUS, XVIII. 20.

And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt show them the way wherein they must walk, and the work they must do.

HAVING used my best endeavours, by God's good permission, to give you a thorough understanding of the different parts of our excellent Church Catechism, as they may be distinguished under the following regular heads—viz. (1.) *the Gospel covenant;* (2.) *the rule of faith,* as set forth in the Holy Scriptures, and drawn up under the articles of our *Creed* or *Belief;* (3.) the test of our faith, by the fruits of obedience to God's positive laws, as declared in the ten commandments; and, (4.) that special means of grace, the duty of prayer in general, which being of such value and indispensable use to Christians, I have been particularly urgent in

my exhortations to you to avail yourselves of so blessed and powerful a means of assisting and strengthening you on all occasions, and under the heaviest trials; I come now to the fifth division of the Catechism, which treats of the spiritual means which God, in pity of our wants, and condescension to our weakness, has further most graciously appointed in his holy Gospel, whereby to convey to us the power of his grace, and to confirm his promises to us in Jesus Christ. These means consist in the worthy or effectual receiving or partaking of the benefits that may be communicated to all believers by the *holy Sacrament which Christ has ordained in his church*, and which is commonly called the Lord's Supper. And as these are means of a very important description, it will be necessary to afford you the most plain and satisfactory information upon the *nature* and *end* of them. And, first, as to the *word* itself.

As I have uniformly laboured to make you perfectly acquainted with the *terms* in which your religious instruction is conveyed, that being the surest method of communicating any rational knowledge of what is proper for you to learn; I shall begin by acquainting you with the literal signification of the word SACRAMENT.

It is taken from the *Latin* tongue, and in its *general* acceptation means, whatever is rendered

holy, and done with a sacred or religious mind or intention. In a more confined sense, it signifies an *oath*—the pledge, faith, or trust, that a thing will be performed; that is, an engagement solemnly made to fulfil some certain purpose; and as the word was used more particularly to denote the oath taken by soldiers to be true to their country and commander, it has been employed by Christian writers to signify *baptism* and the *Lord's Supper*; these being two most solemn engagements, by which the Christian soldier binds himself to Christ, the Captain of his faith, and trustee for salvation.

Thus much is necessary, and I think sufficient, as to the primary meaning of the WORD.

Respecting the *religious* interpretation of it, as that is of still more essential consequence for us to understand, we must pursue our inquiry under that form of definition which our Church delivers of it in these words. By the word *Sacrament* she teaches us that she "*means an* "*outward visible sign of an inward and spiri-*" *tual grace*, (both) *given unto us, and ordain-*" *ed by Christ himself, as a means* (or method) "*by which we* RECEIVE *this said grace*;" and that it is to be considered also as "*a pledge* "(sign, or token) *to assure us thereof*." In other words, we admit these sacraments or outward religious ceremonies, as figures or signs, not only to represent as fully as possible to our

minds, the manner in which the graces or helps we need are conveyed to us; but the very ordinance itself serves to prove the truth of our hope, and to strengthen our faith in the promises of Him who appointed it.

As I shall employ this Lecture in treating of the nature and number of the sacraments in general, it will be proper now to take a more close examination of the sense of the separate portions of the above definition of a sacrament, as represented to us in the Catechism.

1. By the first words we learn, that the outward part or sign of the sacrament does not constitute the GRACE; that is, we may offer this for *ever*, without receiving any benefit from it, as a mere outward act; it is therefore to be considered only as the *sign*, *token*, or *seal* of the grace to be bestowed on such as receive this sign TRULY.—2. From the next words we learn, that these, as Christian sacraments, consist of two parts; for, as there is *an outward visible sign*, so there is as truly *an inward and spiritual grace*, of which the former is the *sign*. There is an inward power that may be conveyed to the mind of the faithful receiver, and therefore is justly called *spiritual* grace, as surely as that the *outward sign* is received by the *body*.—3. Further, we collect from the words, that *both* the outward sign or positive institution, and the spiritual grace or divine help, were origin-

ally appointed, and are still bestowed, by CHRIST HIMSELF; that is, these are the peculiar *badges* of HIS RELIGION. They are ceremonial acknowledgments that we *belong* to him, and they are the means of conveying most valuable benefits to us, as the next expression fully declares; for, (4.) they are said to be *the means whereby we receive the same.* And as a confirmation of what I have before observed, these sacraments cannot produce any essential good to us here or hereafter, by a bare formal use of them as a religious rite: but as they afford marks of our becoming obedience to a positive command, so they are to be understood as *pledges;* that is, a warrant and security to *assure* us of the certainty of our expectation from the due and regular employment of these *means.*

Positive institutions are of great value in preserving and promoting memorable circumstances. In *religion,* they have a most serious tendency.

The institution of the passover among the Jews was ordained of God to keep up the *remembrance* of their wonderful *deliverance* from their enemies by the mighty power of God. That ordinance, by recording a continued sense to their generations, of the peculiar favour of the Almighty towards those he considered as his chosen people, naturally promoted a

spirit of *gratitude* in them towards their glorious Deliverer, and served to strengthen their future dependence on him in time of need. This passover, or final supper, that the Jews made before their departure from Egypt, was assuredly intended as a figure or sign of a much *greater deliverance* obtained in a *spiritual* sense by Jesus Christ for all who come unto God through him, and of *that* supper which he was pleased to appoint in *remembrance* of it, as will be shown you in its proper place. The existence of these outward ordinances, from the very time of their first appointment by Christ, to the present day, by all who believe in his name, affords us a sufficient warrant for the truth of the promises annexed to them. They may be considered just as if any one were to bequeath a legacy to be delivered to a number of persons, only upon their fulfilling *certain written conditions*; the *proper* performance of which would be a warrant for their being *entitled* to the legacy. Their due compliance would act as a security for their obtaining the benefit of such obedience. I say *proper* performance; for it is to be well observed, that the words of our Church do clearly distinguish in this case, between an act of *form* and an act of *faith*; for, by saying sacraments are the *means* of something to be received, and *pledges to assure us* of it, they plainly separate the *spiritual*

from the *bodily* acts; and my reason for *dwelling* on this true *definition* of a sacrament, and repeating it in such different language, is to impress your minds with the essential knowledge concerning the nature of these holy rites of our Christian service. *That*, then, which you may collect from the explanation here afforded you, as absolutely necessary to be known, is, that a sacrament consists of two parts—the *outward visible sign*, and *the inward and spiritual grace*. The *first* we call the *positive institution*; the *second* implies the virtue conveyed to us by a *right use* of it.

I will now proceed to treat of the just number of the sacraments, which will lead to some further useful observations on the nature of them.

Our Church, in the words before us, affirms that there are but "TWO, *as generally necessary* "*to salvation; that is to say, baptism, and the* "*Supper of the Lord.*" Our Church uses the word *generally*, to inform her members, that these sacraments do not belong to some particular description of her community (as to the *minister*, or the more learned order of men *only*), but that they are *essentially* necessary for ALL to receive or partake of, who wish to possess an interest in Christ, and who profess the honour of taking their title of Christians from his *name*; and for this indispensable reason, because Christ has commanded them to be ob-

served by *all* who are not deprived of the opportunity of receiving them.

In this place it will be necessary that I should show you how it appears that these two are PROPERLY *sacraments*, and that none can be truly so called, which have not the *whole nature* of a sacrament belonging to them.

First, the only sacraments we acknowledge as such, do both contain an outward and visible sign, viz. *water in baptism, and bread and wine in the Lord's Supper*. And, secondly, there is an inward and spiritual grace, signified and conveyed by these signs. The *washing of regeneration in baptism* is represented by the cleansing of *water*; for, as the Apostle observes (Tit. iii. 5), in allusion to this sacrament, the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward men appeared, *not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost*; that is, by giving us a new power, through the influence of his Holy Spirit on our hearts, which is at first communicated to all Christians, by the privilege and virtue of *baptism*, on their entrance into the Christian covenant; for this the Apostle further asserts *is shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour*. And respecting the sacrament of the *Lord's Supper*, the same Apostle as clearly declares

(1 Cor. x. 16) an inward spiritual grace or benefit to be conveyed to us thereby in these words—*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?* In other words, these outward signs of bread and wine represent to us Christ's body broken, and blood shed, as an atonement for our sins; and by faith in the virtue of that satisfaction or sacrifice, we are in communion with Christ, or partake of the benefits procured to us by his death. The outward action is rendered a *means* of conveying and continuing to us a principle of new life, or strength to conduct ourselves according to God's will, which is derived to us by the intercession of Him in whom we *believe*. 3. It is requisite to the forming *real* sacraments, that there should be a divine institution of them: the authority of Holy Scripture abundantly proves, that they do not want this mark of validity, since the ordinance of *baptism* is established in Matt. xxviii. 19, past all dispute, in these plain and positive words—*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* And the institution of the Lord's Supper is no less clearly delivered, Luke, xxii. 19; THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME; which St. Paul confirms by a further particular revelation to HIMSELF: *For*

I have received of the Lord (says he) *that which I also have delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night that he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you—this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.* (1 Cor. xi. 23, and following verses.) So that you cannot avoid seeing plainly, that they were both ordained as a *means* whereby to convey their respective graces to us, and as pledges to *assure* us of them: that is, *baptism* to regenerate us, according to our blessed Lord's own declaration above recited, by which all who enter into Christ's church are entitled to the benefits promised by this sacrament in the name of the blessed Trinity. And the Lord's Supper was provided both to strengthen and quicken our repentance for sin committed *after* baptism, and to enable us to perform the vows and conditions mentioned *at* baptism.

Lastly: For these plain reasons, no one can be *so dull* as to imagine but that they are *generally necessary to salvation*, and that all Christians have a right to them; nor may any, without forfeiting the helps for which they were designed, refuse the use of them, wherever an

opportunity is afforded of becoming partakers of such needful blessings. Further, to remove all manner of doubt upon the question, our blessed Lord himself assures us (John, iii. 5), *that except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* This is a most serious passage to be considered by all who slight the use of this sacrament, it being no less than to renounce the positive method Christ has ordained to sanctify the members of his kingdom. It is to doubt the truth of his words, and rashly to join the multitude of heathens and unbelievers. For it is manifest, that an *unbelieving* spirit must prevail, before a man can be dead to the consequence of Christ's assertion (Mark, xvi. 16), that *he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved;* where we see, again, the *outward* sign is positively *required,* it being made the *pledge* or security of our faith; the ordinary means which God, in wisdom, has appointed by his Son, for making us inheritors of the promise of the kingdom of heaven; that is, of our obtaining the gift of the Spirit, which is the *kingdom of God within us here,* and the seal of our living for ever in the kingdom of his saints above, when we have, through grace, perfected the race that is set before us. Nor is the obligation to use the *other* sacrament of less force or import to all true believers; for the institution has been

shown to be equally direct and binding, in that *all* stand in need of power to renew their vows, to qualify their repentance, and to help them on their Christian warfare, which is the particular end of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

I speak to you only in *general* terms at present on these subjects, because, under their proper heads, they will require a more full and particular explanation. All, therefore, that remains to be taken notice of in this introductory Lecture to the thorough understanding of the sacrament is, briefly to show you that there are *two* only that can be admitted *as* such, because *they only* have all the conditions required to make a sacrament, according to the *Scripture* notion of it. The Church of Rome, indeed, from whose errors we have been long reformed, adds no less than *five more* sacraments in her service; and that you may not want any necessary information on this subject, I will just mention these, and briefly convince you that they are not *truly sacraments*, by reason that *none* of them possess *all* the marks, and the most have hardly *any* of them.

1. CONFIRMATION can be *no sacrament*, because Christ did not ordain any such sign, nor made it the means of conveying any spiritual grace to us, or a *pledge to assure us of it*. It can, therefore, only be considered in the light

we truly use it, as an apostolic, holy, and *useful ceremony;* and, as such, our Church retains and practises it.

2. *Public penance* can be NO sacrament, because that also wants Christ's *positive* institution; nor has it any *outward*, appointed, or inward grace particularly promised to it. It is, indeed, a valuable part of *church discipline*, of very ancient and pious usage; and if a true penitent is absolved by his minister, according to the condition of Christ's Gospel, it is certain also, that God confirms the sentence, and forgives the sin; but this is owing to the *mercy of God*, upon the sincere repentance of the sinner, and not to any *separate* virtue of the minister's sentence.

3. What they call *extreme unction* (that is, the anointing the dying person with oil, when his case is desperate), has indeed an *outward sign*, which is the application of the *oil;* but then it is neither of *Christ's*, nor of his *Apostles'* institution, as a *means of grace*. We read, indeed (Mark, vi. 13), *they anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them;* where it is evident, by their *getting well*, that it was with a view to the recovery of their bodily health that they anointed them; whereas this ceremony in the Church of Rome is intended to secure their safe passport into another state: and that the application related to *bodily* effect, is still further proved by St. James, v. 14, 15, where

he observes, *If any were sick, he was to call for the elders of the church, and they were to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;* and he adds, *that the prayer of faith shall save the sick;* that is, the Lord shall raise him up again; *and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.* On this *last clause* the Papists build their sanction for considering that ceremony as a sacrament. It is true, that by the person's *recovery*, if the sickness was visited for any *particular* sin committed by him, the *healing* of the sickness might be a sign that the *sin* also was forgiven, because, till the sin was pardoned, the recovery could not take place; but it is equally clear, that the bare act of *anointing* was of no more use to obtain the one, than it would have had power in itself to effect the other.

4. The ceremony of MATRIMONY cannot claim any right to be called a sacrament, because though it is in truth a holy estate ordained of God, yet it neither holds out any grace, as in the case of baptism, nor increases it, as is the design of the Lord's Supper. And, lastly, 5. ORDINATION, which they reckon as the *seventh* sacrament, though it is likewise a divine *appointment*, and we cannot doubt but that a degree of blessing attends a faithful discharge of the office that is qualified by this apostolical commission, still it is not a *positive means* of grace to the person

receiving it. It is not marked by the *outward visible sign and spiritual grace* peculiar to *baptism* and the *Lord's Supper*. Authority is given by it to those who partake of it, to minister in *holy things*, which otherwise it would not have been lawful for them to do; but then, the degree of grace that may attend it is only the blessing of God upon a *particular employment*, and certainly cannot be held in the light of a *real* sacrament, according to the rules and signs by which the *positive* institution of Christ has rendered such sacraments the *means of grace* to the persons using them as he has expressly appointed.

From all, therefore, that has been said to you at this time, my brethren, on the general subject of these holy ordinances of our Christian faith, it must be evident to you, how *purely* and *carefully* our excellent Church has distinguished the true *ore* of sound evangelical religion, from the *dross* of human tradition, and corrupt inventions. You must discover from this short sketch of the *un*scriptural sacraments with which the Church of Rome has burdened and corrupted *her* service, what a blessing it is to be delivered from these foul prejudices and ignorant doctrines, which delude and darken the true faith of mankind concerning matters of such essential moment. Ordinances which constitute the outward and visible means of our communicating with God, and obtaining the

aid we stand in need of, to furnish our frail nature with acts of necessary obedience, and fortify our faith in the promises which supply the Christian's greatest hope and consolation, must not be reduced to a level with ceremonies which need all the essential marks of genuine sacramental institution. By having our faith and practice kept close to the sober use of these means of grace, which are warranted by the *letter* as well as the *spirit* of the Gospel, we proceed on SURE GROUND; we have always the rule of faith *before us*. The Holy Scriptures are in our *possession;* and by praying to God for light to understand what is necessary therein for our salvation, we can be in no degree of error, either from the wiles of Satan, or the power and treachery of deceitful, wicked men, who pervert the holy ordinances, to magnify their own consequence and gratify their own worldly ends, instead of proposing them, as they really are and were originally designed, as merciful appointments adapted to the wants and present weak nature of men; not to be confined to any particular class or rank of God's servants, but as *generally necessary to the salvation of all* who walk humbly with their God, and are gratefully willing to employ the *means* of salvation which his united wisdom and mercy hath appointed.

May we ever have grace to think JUSTLY of these holy and happy ordinances, by which we

are *enlisted* and *protected* in our blessed Master's service. May we ever use them so uniformly and effectually, that we may bring forth the fruits of holy living, to the honour and glory of God's name, aad the welfare of our own souls, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

To whom, &c.

LECTURE XLVI.

OF BAPTISM.

MATTHEW, XXVIII. 19.

Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

IT has been shown you, in the preceding Lecture upon the subject of the sacraments in general, that the texts advanced are the scriptural warrants for the positive institution of these holy rites. At present, I shall discourse to you upon the nature and design of BAPTISM, and the several ways of administering this sacrament.

By the doctrine of our Church, we esteem baptism as the *first sacrament* of the New Testament; and it is a sacrament of such vast importance for all Christians to receive and understand, that you cannot be too attentive to what I shall (with God's blessing) deliver to you at this time, for your instruction on the subject. I will endeavour to make what it is necessary for

you to know upon it, as plain as possible to the capacity of the most unlearned hearer.

I should hope it almost needless to acquaint you, that it is an *essential* article of our Christian faith, that we must partake of *another* birth, besides this which introduced us to a sense and desire of *temporal* things, or we cannot be qualified for another and better state of existence after the present life is over. This doctrine is laid down by the divine Author of our religion (John, iii. 3, 4, 5): *Jesus said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God:* that is, he can neither perceive the things that belong to this kingdom here (meaning the spiritual kingdom within us, the knowledge of divine things), nor be prepared for an actual enjoyment of the kingdom of heaven hereafter; for, to this end, he *must be born again of the Spirit,* and that for this plain reason, because the things of God can only be *spiritually discerned.* For, as it is absolutely necessary that we should be furnished with *organs* and *senses* particularly adapted for *discerning* and *using* the things of this carnal, temporal world, so is it equally expedient that we should be supplied with proper *powers* to enable us to apprehend and relish the things that belong to our *future* state of happiness. The *natural* man (i. e. the man only judging according to the

course of this world), the vain philosopher, the carnal-minded person, cannot reconcile such a doctrine with the intelligence of mere human reason; and therefore in the next verse we see Nicodemus, who, though he was a *master in Israel, a doctor of the law*, and probably a good *moral* man, yet could not *comprehend* it, any more than a new-born infant, but taking it at the *letter*, proposes this foolish question to our Lord: *How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?* Our blessed Master condescends to stoop to his infirmity by nature, to correct his ignorance, and to inform him of the truth: *Verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* Here is *another* testimony of the *outward visible sign*, and the inward spiritual grace, of which this sacrament is composed; and that there is indisputably *another* birth besides that of the *flesh*, to render a man a member of Christ's body, and which these words fully prove: *For that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit;* and this is that *new* and spiritual birth, our Church holds forth as a principle of our Christian faith.

Baptism, then, is the solemn *means* of our being admitted or entered into the communion of the Christian church; into covenant with

Christ, whereby we are made one of his family, and entitled to the promises as joint heirs with Christ, provided we keep the *terms* of the covenant or engagement then made by us, or for us. As baptism stands in the Christian church in the room of *circumcision* in the Jewish church, so it is to be considered in the same light, as a *seal* of our *adoption*, or (as the Apostle expresses himself) as a *sign of the righteousness of the faith to all them that believe*. (Rom. iv. 11.) Thus we read (Acts, ii. 41), that *they who gladly received the Apostles' word were baptized*, by which sacrament they were immediately admitted to the name and privilege of CHRISTIANS.

The word in the original language signifies both to *dip* into water, and to *wash*. Water is the *outward visible sign, or form in baptism*, administered to us in *the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, and by the outward washing or cleansing whereof, the inward and spiritual grace is represented to us; that is, both the washing away our sins by the blood of Christ (or an atonement for sin in general), and the communication of the *Spirit* of Christ as the power to cleanse us. These, I say, are both clearly signified, and certainly sealed to us, by this holy ceremony; for both these blessings are expressly asserted to belong to it by St. Peter (Acts, ii. 38): *Then said Peter unto them, Repent, and be baptized every*

one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission (or *forgiveness) of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*; that is, a further power of perfecting holiness in *the fear of the Lord.* And that these benefits and effects were generally held out to all Christians, the next verse (39) very clearly proves: *for the promise is unto you, and to* YOUR CHILDREN, *and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord your God shall call,* viz. all the Gentile world that should hear and believe the Gospel. And this truth is further confirmed by the Apostle St. Paul's declaration, in Titus, iii. 5; for he says, *According to his mercy hath he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;* in other words, by the happy privilege of the Christian covenant of BAPTISM, and the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit attending our admission into it, to reform us from the tempers to which we were liable by a fallen nature, without the help of divine grace. And he likewise affords us a satisfactory argument for the efficacy of this sacrament, in Heb. ix. 13, 14: *For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh;* if these outward sacrifices and washings were deemed sufficient to cleanse the Jews from their legal defilements, and qualify them for being again admitted to the service

of the tabernacle and temple (which was ALL they could do); *how much more* (says he) *shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?* that is, to be effectual to the procuring you such a power through the administration of the sacrament of baptism, as shall enable you *to bring forth fruits meet for repentance.*

The *benefits*, therefore, hereby communicated to us, such as pardon of sin, and the further gift of God's grace to help in time of need, are thus summed up in the short, plain, but very expressive words of our Church, and called the *inward and spiritual grace:* viz. *a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness; for, being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace.*

But before we enter into a fuller explanation of this definition of the inward and spiritual grace, the several parts of which deserve a very close examination, I will proceed to consider what may be necessary to communicate to you concerning the *several ways* of administering this sacrament, and this in order to satisfy you of the propriety of the form we use in our own church.

It is necessary here to observe, that the country in which our Saviour lived, being a

hot climate, this ceremony of baptism was generally administered by the act of *dipping*, or plunging the person who was baptized into the water; and thus we read of our blessed Saviour himself, that *he ascended up out of the water.* This was a common custom among Jews upon receiving their proselytes, or new converts to *their* religion; and from this, it seems, our Lord took occasion to ordain his sacrament. Persons, therefore, who were of a proper age and health to *bear* this method, were usually *thus* baptized.

But there can be no doubt that many must have been baptized in a *different manner* from the beginning, because, as *all* who embraced the Gospel were *necessarily* baptized, so several of them could not have been *dipped* in water, such persons, for example, as were too *old* or *ailing*; and it is most likely *all*, at first, were differently baptized; for we read, Acts, ii. 41, that three thousand believed and were baptized at one time, and five thousand at another; and as this was probably transacted in some private house, it would not only have been difficult to have gotten water enough, but laborious, to have dipped them all.

The reason, therefore, of the custom of dipping the persons to be baptized, being so generally *laid aside* in the Church, is grounded on charity, or human tenderness; for when the

Gospel became so universally received, and the persons to be baptized were for the most part *children of believing parents*, many of them, in cold countries, could not be dipped in the water for a great part of the year, without hazard of their health, nay, even of their lives, and therefore it became necessary to sprinkle them with water.

But we have still further grounds, and those most truly scriptural, why the Church considers the act of *sprinkling* only, to be quite sufficient to answer the purpose of this sacrament. For, first, we have the example of the *purifications* under the law, which were made by *sprinklings*, as well as by *washings*. Thus, Levit. iv. 6, we read of the priests *sprinkling* the blood of the sin-offering before the Lord; and the same is repeated Levit. xvi. 14, 15. Again, Isaiah, lii. 15, the Prophet speaking of the free redemption of Christ, says, He shall *sprinkle* many nations; which may be safely interpreted as alluding to the grace communicated by this covenant, and represented by the sprinkling of water. And the Prophet Ezekiel more expressly mentions the very ceremony, in xxxvi. 25, 26, 27, in his display of the blessings of Christ's kingdom—*Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you; a new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and cause you*

to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And we are further confirmed in the propriety and authority of this method, by the application made by St. Paul to the spiritual cleansing of us from our sins, who thus speaks (Heb. x. 22): *Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.* And, accordingly, he warns his disciples, in the 29th verse, *of the much sorer punishment of which they will be worthy, who count the blood of the covenant, wherewith they are sanctified, an unholy thing* (that is, a thing of no great consequence), *and whereby they do despite to the Spirit of grace;* meaning, such as either refuse or despise it. And St. Peter speaks to the same purpose, 1 Ep. i. 2, *to the elect that are sanctified by the Spirit unto obedience, and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ;* for such he asserts, in the 23d verse, ARE BORN AGAIN, *not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.* Thus you see that the resemblance or likeness between sprinkling of *water* in *baptism*, and that *sprinkling of the blood of Christ, by which we are cleansed from our sin*, as they leave sufficient liberty to the Church to administer this sacrament in any of these ways; so the law of charity, that is, a

considerate regard for particular circumstances and situations, required that the Church should make use of *sprinkling*, rather than an *entire* dipping of the body; and we cannot doubt but a God of infinite love and wisdom will approve the performance of our duty in the way most convenient for us, provided it is done on a principle of sincere *obedienee* to his positive command, and with faith in the spirit of his *promise;* for he teaches us (Matt. ix. 13) *to go and learn what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice:* that is to say, it is *spiritual purity* he requires in his service; and that we must not place virtue in any outward rites or forms of worship (however *positive* their appointment), independent of the fruit they are intended to represent and convey to us. The *way* of administering this sacrament is therefore immaterial, provided it is not contradictory to the *authority* we may draw from Scripture, that it sufficiently declares the *sign* of grace promised to it as a *means*, and that we receive it with pure faith in the divine Author of it, and the promise he has made to those that believe.

As to the second part: from the *way* of administering this sacrament, we proceed to consider the matter and *form*, which by our Church is termed "*the outward and visible sign* "*or form in baptism.*" Now, the *two* necessary parts of this sacrament are *water*, and the

word. The *first* is the sign that represents to us our *spiritual washing* and cleansing by the *blood of Christ*. The other is the *form* that declares to us the *faith* into which we are baptized, and by which we hope to be saved, viz. *in the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost*.

The *use* of this element of *water*, as a *sign*, the Church can in no case depart from, because it is of *positive divine* appointment. In no part of Scripture will you read of baptism being administered but WATER is used, it being so excellent an emblem to signify our inward cleansing by the means of Christ's death: for it points out to us, that, in like manner as our bodies are washed with, and purified from their *outward* defilements by *water;* so are our souls purified from both the effects and habits of sin, by the sacrifice of Christ: and, therefore, for both these essential reasons it is a necessary and unchangeable part of this holy sacrament. The *form*, also, is equally indispensable to be used, because this sacrament cannot be properly administered *without* it.

It is indeed said of some in the Apostles' times, Acts, xix. 5, and elsewhere, *that they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus:* but this expression, it may be affirmed, is principally used to distinguish the case of *Jewish* converts, or those who had before re-

ceived the *baptism of John only*. It by no means determines, that people were baptized in no *other form*. On the contrary, there can be no doubt, but that the immediate followers of Jesus Christ would use the very *form of words* he had himself expressly charged them to employ in his commission to them *to teach all nations, and to baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. All, therefore, that this *former* expression is meant to affirm, is, that they were baptized in the *faith* of Christ; and as that cannot be disputed, we may very safely conclude, they would use no *other* form than the *Author* of that faith had positively commanded. And, indeed, the words of St. Peter, Acts, ii. 38, do fully imply, that this form was used; for he there advises the converts to Christianity to be baptized in the *name of the Lord Jesus, for the remission of sins:* and he promises them, that they shall receive the gift of the *Holy Ghost*. Now, as none can remit sins but GOD, and as it is here said that this remission or forgiveness is granted for the sake of Jesus Christ, and as the promise of the regenerating influence of the Spirit is added, here is *essentially* the *form* of *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*. However, therefore, the difference of language may affect the *letter* of the form, since persons of all countries are to be baptized, in order to lay claim to the

Christian covenant, we only insist, that all who are baptized, in what way soever it be done, ought to be baptized in the *name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, or they do not receive *Christian baptism*, according to the *scriptural* institution of the sacrament.

Thus much may be sufficient to satisfy your minds as to the nature and necessity of the outward form and sign in baptism.

We come now to consider the second and most *material* part of it, the *inward and spiritual grace*. This, in the words of our Catechism, is explained to be "*a death unto sin*, "*and a new birth unto righteousness*." In which words is set forth our faith, as to our state by nature and grace. They express the very ground of our Christian profession; they declare, that, in consequence of a fallen and corrupted nature (that is, a different state to what the creature was *originally* formed in by its Maker), we must inevitably be BORN IN SIN, by reason we are born of a *corrupted* seed according to the *flesh*. *The inward and spiritual grace* that is represented by this *outward visible sign of water, is the death unto sin* (or a *washing away of sin), and a new birth unto righteousness*. And this is most clearly asserted in Romans, vi. 3, 4: *Know ye not* (says the Apostle), *that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus, were baptized into his* DEATH? *There-*

fore we are buried with him by baptism into death (that is, a death unto sin, or an engagement to forsake it). *And in like manner as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory* (or power) *of the Father, even so we* (by the help of the grace now conveyed to us by virtue of that resurrection) *should walk in newness of life;* which is the very same, in effect, *as a new birth unto righteousness,* and which is the spiritual grace promised in this sacrament.

That all men are *by nature born in sin,* is evident from the *experience* of all, and confirmed by the Scripture account of it. *For, behold,* saith the Psalmist (li. 5), *I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin hath my mother conceived me.* And the Apostle St. Paul (Rom. v. 12) informs us, that *by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;* and this is manifest, because none was entirely free from this unhappy state, *but He only who knew no sin,* THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Now, as all men are by nature *born in sin,* they must of necessity be *children of wrath;* for, as the Apostle observes, Eph. ii. 2, *In that we had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, we were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.* And this must be

very clear to every one, because every degree of sin cannot but be *hateful* to God, who being *all perfection*, nothing impure can stand before him; and that it *deserves punishment* is *equally* clear, both from the testimony of Scripture, and the reason of things—*for the wages of sin is death.*

This being the state of all creatures before they are admitted into the Christian covenant, herein consists the essential virtue of this sacrament, in that *thereby we are* MADE THE CHILDREN OF GRACE *.

* This may appear more plain by a familiar comparison. Supposing a father to have two sons, who had entirely ruined themselves by their misconduct, and were wholly depending on his *free bounty* for the means of retrieving their situation. Now, their *equal* obligation for this happy opportunity of doing well, must be evident at *first sight*. In proportion as either of them improves or neglects the advantages afforded him, he will naturally perfect, or defeat, the generous purpose of the common parent. Their *undeserved* portion qualifies them *equally to do well*; the condition is, to employ it *wisely*. He that hath availed himself of his renewed *good state*, must acknowledge the hand that placed him in it, and that, *without* this favour, the recovery of his happiness could never have taken place: and, on the other hand, he that *refuses to accept* the *means*, or *abuses* them, can only blame *himself*. The virtue, therefore, of the *means*, and the mercy of the *provider*, are equally established, because it is undeniable, that what was calculated to effect the happiness of *one* person, needed only an equal regard to the *condition* to restore *the other*.

To all who possess a true Christian faith, the benefits thus communicated by *baptism* must be self-evident. But if this is absolutely necessary to salvation, a question may arise upon the doctrine, concerning the fate of those who have not the opportunities of receiving this Christian sacrament. To which the answer is abundantly clear—that, concerning the *uncovenanted* mercies of God, we have nothing to do. Our pure faith in God's goodness leads us to believe *he will be justified when he is judged* as to the fate of *all* creatures that ever were born. Humility teaches us to resolve the case of such persons and infants *without* the pale of Christianity, into his unerring wisdom and decrees. Doubtless, the blood of Christ is sufficient expiation for the sins of the whole world; but the manner of the application rests with *God alone*, to determine as he thinks best. The care of our *own* souls is what *we* must attend to. It has pleased God to promise the saving effect of Christ's death *to us*, through the means of the Gospel. *Our* fate, therefore, depends on our *fulfilling* the condition of his covenant. *Our* final acceptance or rejection will depend entirely upon our having profited by the very sufficient *means* of grace most mercifully offered, or upon our having neglected to *employ them*.

In this deplorable state by a sinful nature,

and unable to help *ourselves*, we are certainly inexpressibly indebted to Almighty God for such a provision as renders us at once the *children of grace*:—and this is the expression that remains to be explained to you.

To be a *child of grace*, signifies to be taken again freely into favour with God; to be as secure of his love for the *sake* of Christ's *merits* (till we break the conditions of this new covenant), as though we had not inherited a fallen nature. And surely this magnifies the goodness of God, and proves the benefits of baptism, showing, at the same time, the peculiar advantages of being born of Christian parents; for children thus descended, have *a right* to the adoption by *baptism*, as the children of the Jews had by *circumcision*; and therefore being heirs of God's promises, should they chance to die before they have positively entered into Christ's church, we christianly trust, that God, through Christ, will still receive them to his mercy: and this seems to be confirmed by the Apostle's remark in another place: *Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.* (1 Cor. vii. 14.)

To show you further *how* those that are baptized, are thereby made the *children of grace*, will supply sufficient instruction on the subject of this sacrament for the *present*.

God having promised certain privileges,

through Christ, to those who will obey his positive ordinances; they, by *such obedience*, are consequently put in possession of these peculiar advantages. Now, this is done by virtue of their being taken into a new covenant with God—by being *regenerated* by the Holy Spirit, that is, receiving a new power to please God—by being sanctified and cleansed from the effects of *original sin*, by the blood of Christ—and by being entitled, through this free grace, to God's favour; and, lastly, by being made *heirs of his heavenly kingdom*. All, therefore, who have been admitted to this sacrament, should they die before they commit any *actual* sin, we may rest assured, through the merits and mediation of the Redeemer, they will certainly be saved. As this is a very interesting part of the subject, it will be further satisfactory to you to produce such passages of Scripture as will clearly explain it. Those which I shall present, are but a small number that might be advanced to confirm the value of this *first* Christian sacrament. In St. Mark, xvi. 16, we read that our blessed Lord, after his resurrection, thus closed his commission to his disciples, as to the work of preaching the Gospel: *He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be damned.* You see what an important sanction and promise are ascribed to the *performance*, and also what a dreadful consequence attends

the *contempt* of this holy ordinance. Again (Acts, ii. 38, 39), we have an express warrant for the *effect of regeneration*, from these words: *Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.* And that the children of believers are *entitled* to these blessings, is evident from the first line of the next verse, as quoted before, respecting the efficacy of baptism to cleanse us from the stain and punishment of our offences: of this we are assured from the following words (xxii. 16): *And now, why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sin, calling on the name of the Lord.* This you see was necessary, even for St. Paul, in order to qualify him for the office of his apostleship. And that these gifts are alone derived to us by the blood of Christ, we learn from that Apostle's declaration, Gal. iii. 27, *For, as many of you as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ.* And he speaks to the same purpose, Eph. ii. 4, 5, *For God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; for, by grace ye are saved;* as much as if he had said, in the words of our Church Catechism, "*From being the children of wrath, ye are* "*made the children of grace.*" And the same benefits the Apostle ascribes to baptism, when speaking of the *whole church* (Eph. v. 26); *For*

he so *loved it, that he gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the* WASHING OF WATER *by the* WORD. Here we see, again, both the sign and form alluded to, to be essential in its administration. And that this sacrament is effectual to the rescuing us from our lost state by nature, and to the helping us to work out our salvation, is further manifest from the same Apostle's words to Titus (iii. 5), *Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his* MERCY *he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost;* that is, cleansing us from the effect of a sinful nature, and obtaining for us the assistance of the Holy Spirit: and to this the words of St. Peter (1 Ep. iii. 21) exactly agree, who gives the utmost virtue to this sacrament in this assertion, that, *by this type, or sign of water in baptism, we are* NOW SAVED (i. e. we thereby become adopted children); *it is not the mere putting away the filth of the flesh* (not the bare *form* or *sign* representing this), *but the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ;* that is, showing forth the holy effect of it by a *faith* that cleanses from sin, as water does the body from filth; for, Christian baptism has no power, as a mere *outward* ceremony, as described by the comparison of *washing* or *cleansing* the *body*, but its *nature* and *benefits* consist in its being a

solemn engagement, on *our part*, to dedicate ourselves to the service of Christ; and, on God's part, it holds out the promise of eternal life, on condition of our performing the engagement—a promise we are certain, says the Apostle, to see fulfilled, as having now a perfect *pledge* and *earnest* of it, by the *resurrection of Christ from the dead;* and we are therefore bound to prove the *answer of a good conscience* to the questions put to us, and answered *by* or *for* us, in our baptism. In what *manner* this becomes beneficial both to infants and grown persons, we shall see, when we come to treat of that part of the Catechism. What remains to be considered on this part of the subject, is to inquire how far *all* that are baptized are made *partakers* of these benefits: for, though this sacrament is equally administered unto *all*, as to the *outward visible sign and form;* yet it is too true that many do not appear to partake of the "*inward spiritual grace*" that is promised to it. Now, as this inquiry concerns the dispositions proper for baptism, and the condition it holds out, it will be sufficient to observe, on the conclusion of this Lecture, that by *this* sacrament all are put in a way to salvation, which they were *not in before*, and become children of grace, or heirs of the peculiar and unmerited favour of God. And the reason that *all* do *not* show forth the good *effects* this state is calcu-

lated to produce, is, that *such only* continue in it, who hold forth their *right* to these benefits—who take care to live according to the Gospel of Christ, and to fulfil the promises and conditions which they either made in their own persons, or which were made *for* them by *others* in their *name*, and on their behalf, at their baptism. In short, they fail, because they *break* the covenant into which they are admitted by this sacrament.

To sum up all that concerns this *first* discourse on baptism in few words: Being, by a disordered nature, inclined to *sin*, and consequently at enmity with an all-perfect Being, and liable to *punishment*, it argues an act of the *richest mercy*, to contrive and propose *any* method of recovery for creatures who *wilfully incurred God's wrath*. *Baptism* is that *new covenant* or *engagement* into which we are *again* received, and whereby we have fresh help afforded, to become prepared for God's final acceptance of us in his heavenly kingdom. The *cause* is the *merits of Christ:* the particular *sign*, *form*, and *effect* must be submitted to God's infinite wisdom and goodness: these have been positively appointed for our *use*, and most *fully* explained to you. Humble *faith* is the principle that enables us to apply the promised benefits: we become *dead unto sin*, by a sincere *wish* to forsake it, and show our hatred to it,

by the proof of *actual amendment*—we become *alive unto righteousness*, by the new birth of the Spirit of grace, vouchsafed to us in this sacrament, which helps and promotes our endeavours to please God. In short, it renews, in all Christian and true believers, good motives and desires, a sense of what is right, and an inclination to perform it, *which, by nature alone, we cannot have;* and therefore all who are baptized are most properly called *children of grace*, or free favour. A true faith in Christ and in the Holy Spirit, teaches us to *believe* this. God grant that all present may experience the blessed effects of this qualifying sacrament of Christ's church, and that we may none of us resist the power therein promised to help us in *keeping* our baptismal vows. This is the condition of the covenant on *our* part, and of which I shall treat with equal fulness in my next Discourse. May God, for Christ's sake, give his blessing to these humble endeavours for your Christian improvement, and enlighten all our minds to receive the saving knowledge of this truth, through Jesus Christ our blessed Lord and Saviour. To whom, &c.

LECTURE XLVII.

ON BAPTISM.

SECOND PART.

OF THE REQUISITES FOR BAPTISM, AND THE EXPEDIENCY OF RECEIVING IT.

MATTHEW, III. 11.

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance.

This declaration of the Baptist is confirmed by the injunction of the Apostle, in the following words:

ACTS, II. 38.

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

In my former Lecture on the subject of this sacrament, I treated chiefly of its outward institution, and the benefits it is calculated to convey to Christians in general, as a *free gift of God.* I took some pains to repeat, enforce, and place in various points of view, what Al-

mighty God, of his infinite goodness and mercy, has done on his part for the recovery of his fallen creatures. In the present Discourse I shall confine myself particularly to the condition whereby this holy sacrament can alone become effectual to grown persons; or, in other words, what must be done on our parts, to prove that we actually possess a valuable share of this "*inward* "*and spiritual grace;*" and which our Catechism thus intimates in the question, "*What is re-* "*quired of persons to be baptized?*" The answer, you all know, is, REPENTANCE and FAITH. Now, as neither of these can properly belong to infants, I shall divide the subject of my present inquiries into two distinct parts:

First, I shall consider the dispositions and conduct required in those of riper years, which will include the serious case of those who have broken their baptismal vows: and,

Secondly, I shall offer a few observations upon the case of infants that are brought to be baptized.

We will follow our usual method of attending to the strict meaning of the words we use. By *repentance*, then, is meant a *change of mind*. This is the literal signification of the original term.

At the first preaching of the Gospel, the conditions of salvation by Jesus Christ were generally proposed to mankind; *grown persons*

were consequently the subjects of conversion. From all who were desirous to embrace the truths and blessings of the Gospel, a preparation was positively required and proposed to them, both by Christ and the messenger that was sent before him; for, even previous to our Saviour's delivery of these glad tidings of peace in his *own person*, John the Baptist preached, saying, *Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand* (Matt. iii. 2); that is, the Master himself is about to offer salvation unto sinners, on the terms of *repentance*. John the Baptist was the forerunner of Christ, commissioned, by miraculous appointment, *to prepare the way before him*. His preaching the *baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, and his baptizing with water unto repentance* (Matt. iii. 11), plainly testify the work of redemption to have been determined, through Christ, from the beginning of the world, and that there was a light and power vouchsafed to man, even before the more positive publication of the Gospel, though it was obscured and abused by the ignorance and superstition of the heathen world, and by the perverseness of man's own will united; for, if this had *not* been the case, it would have been quite superfluous in the Baptist to invite men to do what it was *impossible* to perform, and no man before the positive preaching of the Gospel could have been saved. By the figure

of *water*, therefore, even in *John*'s baptism, the necessity of a degree of purification was *established*, and holds forth an indispensable condition or qualification to be fulfilled, though not in that high degree as should hereafter be communicated by Christ, when the *fulness of time was come:* and this *distinction* the Baptist very clearly states in the text (Matt. iii. 11): *I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance* (to show that some *change* of life and manners *must* take place before your sins can be forgiven): *but He that cometh after me, is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire;* that is, he shall purify you with a virtue superior to that I am able to bestow. The gift of the Holy Spirit shall act upon you with the subtlety of *fire*, producing such improvements in you, as shall declare the truth of Christ's mission, both by inward regeneration and outward miracles; and thus, it is proper and necessary that you should be prepared for receiving his word: as though the Apostle had said, All you can do by *my* baptism, and by the strength ye already possess, in consequence of the promise immediately made on Adam's fall, is trifling, in comparison of what the *further* influence of the Spirit is capable of *effecting;* so that, by the blessing and light of the Gospel, ye may well be said to be brought

out of darkness and the shadow of death (Psa. cvii. 14): *and that the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.* (Isaiah, ix. 2.)

The intention of my advancing these texts, and this short comment upon them, is to set before you a *truth*, which the study of the word of God will invariably CONFIRM to you, namely, that *repentance* is not only made a previous condition of forgiveness, but the leading duty of Christianity. Thus the Lord himself speaks (Mark, i. 15), *Repent ye, and believe the Gospel;* where repentance is evidently placed *before faith*, in the order of the *command.* Again, *Except ye* REPENT, *ye shall all likewise perish.* (Luke, xiii. 3.) Christ, you see, will not remit what we do not *repent* of; he does not promise pardon on any other terms. And thus, also, the Apostle exhorts (Acts, viii. 22), *Repent of this wickedness, and pray to God;* where sorrow for sin is plainly made a *preparation* for PRAYER. Again (xxvi. 20) he saith, that *men are every where commanded to repent, and turn to God;* which is as much as to affirm, that it is impossible to turn unto him, while they CONTINUE IN SIN. Indeed, this is very manifest from the express sense of *this* text: *Repent and be converted, that* (or, in order that) *your sins may be blotted out* (Acts, iii. 19); where *conversion* implies *repentance*, and is proposed as an absolute condition upon which all offences shall be

forgiven. Nothing can be clearer or stronger than the language, THAT THEY MAY BE BLOTTED OUT; it being a positive declaration, that *without* repentance they shall *not* be blotted out. It may be useful, therefore, to inquire further, what true repentance *is*. It consists of two parts; *sorrow* for sins *past*, and actual *amendment* of life, according to the original import of the word itself. While in an *impenitent* state we are *averted* or turned *from* God; upon our repentance we are *converted*, or turned *to* him: in the one case we become inclined or fitted to meet his mercy; in the other case we turn our backs upon it, being *dead in trespasses and sins*. But here it may be asked, As repentance itself is the *gift of God*, how can a man be expected to repent, until he has that *power given* him? How can *that* be required of him, as a *condition* which he is not able to perform but by an act of *free grace*? To this we reply, by the confession that not only repentance is the *gift of God, but that the goodness of God leadeth men to repentance*. Nothing is more certain, than *that every good and perfect gift cometh from above*. A necessary degree of this gift is bestowed on all men in the light of *conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts meanwhile accusing, or else excusing, one another*, as is declared to be the exact state of the heathen world. So far, then, the *free gift* is given unto

every man, through *Christ*; and to those who are born under the still *clearer light of the Gospel*, the goodness of God is evident, in its *leading men to repentance*, by the *various* means the Gospel directs to that end. They are in general such as these, viz. by prolonging their lives, or by placing them in various suitable situations, or by affording them abundant *means* of turning from the error of their ways, and *thus perfecting* their *repentance*. As a man, therefore, in his senses (however ignorant), cannot but be conscious when he is doing *wrong*; and as, in a Christian land, he has many further opportunities of conviction; no one is left without the *ordinary* means of grace: like all *other* gifts to man after his *fall*, it must be called a *free gift*; because he could neither *merit* nor *obtain* it by any thing of his own doing; nor could he be put in any state of recovery *without* it. The power of repentance, therefore, like all other preparations for salvation, indisputably originates in the *mercy* of God, *through Christ*; and it is positively necessary also, that man should have the power of choosing or rejecting this gift, or he could neither be capable of amendment, nor accountable for neglect. If we allow it to be in the power of one person under the Christian covenant to *repent*, and another *not*, we deny the *general* efficacy of the sacrament of baptism, and make God *a respecter of per-*

sons. The grace of God, through Jesus Christ, is purchased by the Lord of life for *all* men, though they may be differently *accountable* under various dispensations. Our Lord himself assures us it will be more tolerable for *Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for the perverse and wicked cities who would not receive the proffers of salvation through his Gospel.* And though it may not be impossible for a person to *outlive his day of grace,* yet we may assert it is impossible that any man with truth can say, he has lived to a good old age, without any invitation either from *within* or *outwardly,* to repent of all his sins. Thus far, then, every man was endued with such a capacity of coming unto Christ's baptism, as prepared him for the further grace communicated by it, and which, when he reduced it to *practice,* might be truly said to be the *gift of God.* And it is equally true, that, after having received this sacrament, whether in a state of *infancy,* or riper years, an additional virtue is communicated to the person thus made a member of Christ's church, in consequence of the promise of God, which can never fail, provided the conditions of the covenant are not infringed on man's part.

Now, herein God's great compassion and long-suffering are most marvellously *conspicuous:* for, as man by nature is *prone to sin,* as he inherits a body beset with manifold infir-

mities, and has besides so many enemies to contend with, our heavenly Father holds out this so *sovereign* condition of repentance, to *all* who have not profited by the grace bestowed upon them in baptism, but have wilfully and grossly broken the vows then made either *for* them or by *themselves*. The *first* part of repentance that presents itself to such persons, is concern for their ingratitude (or CONVICTION); and this, if sincere, effects *amendment* or *conversion*. For example: from a true sorrow for past offences, an awakening view of the dreadful consequences of *continuing* in them, and constant religious and devout desire of *amendment*, the fornicator becomes chaste and modest, the drunkard sober, the swearer and sabbath-breaker pious, the idle becomes industrious, and the unjust person honest: in short, the sins *which most easily beset men*, are laid aside; the remembrance of them is hateful and afflictive, and the opposite virtues distinguish their future conduct. Nay, even the vices of the *mind* are gradually subdued, and confirm that *change* essential to repentance: for *pride* gives way to *humility; charity* and Christian love take place of all revenge; envy yields to *contentment* and general good-will; passion and malice, to meekness and forgiveness. But though these marks of true repentance must necessarily appear, before any grown person can be said to be *pre-*

pared for, or to have *profited by,* the grace communicated in baptism; or, according to the short and plain definition of our Catechism, they must *have forsaken sin;* yet our Church holds out *another* condition, of no less necessary importance in the work of our salvation, and that is FAITH. And though repentance is that true conversion of heart to God, whereby sin becomes the object of our *hatred,* and God and his ways our present choice and pursuit; yet every man must be sensible, that, after the utmost improvement, he is still *imperfect,* and an unprofitable servant *when all is done:* that there is an infectious taint in his nature, which will cleave to him while in the flesh: that though, through the *gift* of repentance, he partakes of the happy assurance of what the power of God can and must do in him, by changing the heart of the *disobedient to the wisdom of the just;* yet, if he is without a saving sense of what Christ has done FOR him *likewise,* he will want the principal support a frail creature stands in need of: for though we have grace to *work,* yet, as we must be sensible nothing *we* can do will justify us *before God;* so, without *faith* in the *promises,* Christians, above all others, *would be most miserable:* we must, therefore, *steadfastly believe the promises of God made to us* (through Christ) *in this sacrament.* When we consider the treachery of the *human heart, that it is deceit-*

ful above all things, that our most *specious* acts of goodness are at the bottom greatly adulterated by selfishness of one description or the other; that the poison of original sin cleaves to us, to our flesh, and to our bones; we are then led to acknowledge the *blessing* of a *Redeemer,* the absolute necessity of a *Mediator* and *Intercessor,* who can stand in the gap between the demands of God's perfection, and our insufficiency; who, by the merits of his *satisfaction* and *ransom* paid, can so far qualify what he has already begun *in us,* that the preparation shall be a sufficient warrant for the further clothing of perfection. The gift, then, my brethren, for which we must daily pray, is, that God would form and strengthen in us a *hearty reliance* on the *blessed Jesus for salvation.* But we must be ever cautious not to separate the grace of preparation from the hope of the reward. For, as it is most certain, that *Christ is gone before, to prepare a place for those that love him,* that is, for those who walk diligently in his ways; so will he receive *none* but what are proportionally *fitted* for the part they might have filled: *none who are not made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.* That this is a state of *trial, discipline,* and training for a *better* life, no Christian believer can doubt. We must be equally sensible that some advancement in virtue and godliness must be visible in all of

us, before we go hence, or we never can be qualified for serving God in purity, or capable of enjoying the riches of his love (for there is no repentance in the grave); and the *proof* of this is the essential *difference*, even *here*, between the servants of God and the slaves of sin. We must, in some degree, be weaned from the pleasures and love of this world, or we shall never heartily *place our affections on things above*. This is the work of God on the *heart*, and brought about by various means, that in his wisdom and mercy he contrives for our eternal happiness. These calls and motions, as it is our duty and interest, so should it be our greatest delight to close with and obey; for by these we are gently warned to *sit loose to self*, and the *pride of life*, and to give up our *whole will* to God; to trust in no comfort but his favour, which procures a *peace which passeth all understanding*. A saving faith will certainly produce these good effects; for with the HEART *man believeth unto righteousness*. It is this we must earnestly strive to cultivate. The more we examine our depravity by *nature*, and confess our great unworthiness, and insufficiency, of *ourselves*, for any thing that is good, the better disposed we shall find ourselves for the admission of this essential principle of the Christian life and hopes, and then we shall grow in the faith that worketh by love.

To enter further into this subject at the present time, and do *justice* to the several particular parts necessary to be explained to you, would far exceed the usual limits of my Discourse. I shall, therefore, defer what I have further to say on the important article of *infant baptism*, to my next Lecture, if it shall please God to preserve us to that opportunity; and conclude at present, with a fervent prayer to the Almighty, that, through the mediation of Jesus Christ, we may all obtain such a portion of the *inward spiritual grace* held forth to us in this sacrament, that finally we may become as little children (for of such is the kingdom of God composed), and be prepared for that blessed inheritance.

Now to God the Father, &c. *

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* *What follows, was an addition made to this Lecture on an Evening when there happened to be a Funeral.*

As we have just before us an instance of our own *perishable state*, of that sentence to which (by the curse against sin) we are *every one of us subject* (the death of the body); I shall defer the remaining part of this particular subject to another opportunity, and conclude at present, with a few plain remarks, which this *immediate* memorandum of mortality naturally suggests, where the mind is awake to a sense of *serious things*. There is no lesson so instructive, my brethren, as the *approach of death* in a fellow-creature; and even the last mournful offices we pay to our departed friends, have something solemnly affecting, and peculiarly calculated to remind us that *we too must die*. The appearance of a *dying* person (even of one we may comparatively

call a righteous man) speaks more home to our inward feelings, than volumes of most eloquent admonition. Here, at one view, we see the *vanity* of all *human wishes*—the insufficiency of all *worldly help:* wealth, power, talents, fame, furnish a mere bubble, that is ready to burst and disappear for ever. In the *good* man's end (however melancholy the approach of dissolution to *flesh and blood)*, the *Spirit* rejoices in the fruits of faith and hope: poverty, and disease, and pain, have done their worst; *the weary are at rest, and the wicked cease from troubling.* Nothing but the *sting* of death has any terror, and that sting is SIN, but which is permitted to *wound* none but the profligate and impenitent. Over the redeemed it has no further power than to kill the body for a time; still, its last effect upon this *body* is awful to contemplate; for *this* is a debt, even the *best* must pay, since *in Adam all die;* but it is the Christian's supporting *hope, that in Christ shall all be made alive.* Let us attend most seriously to the *condition,* my brethren—every one will rise in *his own order,* and none will live for ever in a blissful sense of existence but those *that are Christ's at his coming;* and to be *Christ's at his coming, we must die in the Lord; for, such as we die, so shall we rise again. There will be no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;* but, then, they only can be so distinguished, *who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;* that is, who have Christ so *formed* in them *as to be dead unto sin, and alive unto righteousness, who have shown forth works meet for repentance,* and thereby evinced a lively faith in their Redeemer. Now, this we earnestly hope was the case of our humble fellow-creature, whose remains we are now about to deposit in the dust, of which this mortal body is composed. *Blessed are they that die in the Lord.* We trust, I say, *his* spirit enjoys *that rest* our God has promised to the faithful. A long continuance in manners inoffensive to society, a pious dependence on his Redeemer's help, and contentment in the station Providence appointed, seem to have marked his *living* character; and in *death* I could perceive no fond presuming intimation of *preference,* no

suspicions, no rapturous foretaste of joys ineffable, to which an imprisoned spirit cannot reach; but that *humble, tranquil* resignation to the will of God, whether for *life* or *death*, whether under *pain* or *ease*, which affords the surest and most pleasing evidence that religion hath wrought a valuable work upon the soul. Such is the WILL *turned to God in all things*, a deep sense of our own unworthiness, and an humble faith in God's *mercy through Christ, with such a thankful remembrance of his death*, as proves a steadfast reliance on his *power*. So far as these principles employed the thoughts of our departed neighbour, we may all devoutly pray, *that our last end may be like his*. I have taken the opportunity, my brethren, of seeing *more* of you in this holy house, than *frequently* is the case, to offer a word of earnest exhortation upon an occasion so interesting to us *all*. I shall be happy if the wish of improvement, more than customary curiosity, was the motive of your present attendance; for, if the former influenced your minds, your leisure would equally enable you to attend this place and hour much oftener. And though some might come with no other wish than to witness the burial of a neighbour, yet, by God's grace, they might go away with a valuable impression of what such solemn scenes are capable of making upon the heart. Compare, then, your own lives, my brethren, with that of your departed neighbour, and you will own that you need considerable change in many particulars, before you will be enabled to encourage so good a hope as he enjoyed. If you were to be called hence this moment, you would feel but ill prepared for the change; you would need much time for *preparation*. Examine, then, as to your own hearts. Have you the witness of the Spirit by the daily improvement of your lives and conversation, that Christ has begun the work of repentance in you? If he has called during your whole life, and you have not answered, how can you expect that he will hear you, when the hour of *working is over*? *The night cometh, when no man can work: therefore, my brethren, be ye ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh.* These words are addressed to

every one of us in particular; and the last and best advice I can give you on this subject, is to attend to the *true* and only method of preparing for your latter end, which is to spend the present time well, and ever to remember that you are to *account* for *that*, and *every* moment of your lives. God grant we may all so wisely consider our latter end, that, when the hour of *our* departure is arrived, death may prove to us the gate of *happiness*, and not of woe eternal; and this we beg for Jesus Christ's sake. To whom, &c.

LECTURE XLVIII.

ON INFANT BAPTISM.

MATTHEW, XIX. 14.

But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

THE case of those who are admitted to baptism when of *riper* years, and that of backsliding Christians (that is, such as, by neglecting the grace afforded them at baptism, have fallen into trespasses and sins), engaged the inquiries in my former Discourse on this Christian rite; I shall, therefore, confine myself at present to some useful considerations on the nature of INFANT BAPTISM. Laborious treatises, and much controversy, have been employed on this subject; but attempts of this kind do not come within the compass or design of this undertaking; the end of these Lectures being merely to supply a short, plain, and scriptural exposition of the articles of faith and practice contained in the Church Catechism, and to illustrate the same

by familiar application: and we humbly trust, that every unlearned Christian that is willing and content to strive after that degree of instruction which the Church supplies, will experience profitable information by a serious attention to the several subjects that have been explained and enlarged upon with this view to their improvement.

The words of the text afford us a valuable proof of the happy state of infants in *general*, through the merits of a Redeemer; and of those in particular, *who are suffered to come unto Christ;* for you see that the Master himself declares positively *that of such is the kingdom of heaven.* And he assures us still more expressly in another place (Mark, x. 15), that whosoever shall *not* receive the *kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter therein.* The sense of these last words may be interpreted *two ways*, with equal propriety: first, they may be supposed to signify a plain sanction of the ceremony of infant baptism *itself*, and to intimate a severe threat against those who should wilfully *refuse* this means of grace, as on that account they would not be allowed to enter the *kingdom of heaven*, that is, taking the *kingdom of heaven*, in the acceptation it is often used, for the privileges of the Gospel, and the new covenant *established by Christ;* as, by such obstinate refusal of bringing children to baptism, in obe-

dience to Christ's command, they would exclude them from the benefits promised to all who partake of this holy sacrament. Or, secondly, it may be understood to imply, that those who finally shall be admitted into the kingdom of heaven, considered as an actual state of *reward*, must first be qualified by such *humility* as becomes the state of *little children*, who can have *no* attainments or pretensions but through the assistance of their superiors, on whom they depend. Thus, whichever way we take the words, we are plainly taught, that whatever share we may now have in that *kingdom of God* which is said to be *within* us, it must proceed from the *free gift of God*, through Christ, which grace is communicated as a seed sown at *baptism*: or whether we finally attain to the blessed inheritance of the saints above, by a *profitable cultivation* of that seed, and the means of grace provided for us as a *preparation*; still, with the submission of *infants*, we must attribute such astonishing goodness of God to the *merits* of his Son Jesus Christ, for whose sake as a faithful and tender father, and in compassion to our infirmities, he vouchsafes to *show mercy* as to children, that cannot possibly have deserved any good at his hands. Upon the whole, we see the necessity of divine assistance, and are thereby led to acknowledge our own unworthiness and insufficiency, which, in proportion as

the confession is *sincere*, likens and reduces us to the state of helpless and dependent little children, who need being *guided* and *instructed*, to render them capable of acting with propriety and advantage to themselves and others.

From this short view of the text, there is the greatest encouragement to bring your children to Christ, that is, to be *baptized*, or entered into the *Christian covenant;* since our blessed Lord declares, *of such is the kingdom of heaven:* and as he has promised infants an *interest in his death* (barely by this *deed)*, in case of their being removed from the world *before* they are accountable for their actions; since, having been *born in sin*, and consequently *children of wrath*, they stand in need of an *atonement*, or infinite satisfaction, to deliver them from the stain and curse of original sin; so, in order that they may finally become children of *grace* or *free favour*, through the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, this call in the text must be most religiously attended to; and, therefore, it argues a great degree of sin and unbelief, to refuse a compliance with this gracious invitation, whatever humble hope may be entertained, that, in the depth of God's *uncovenanted* mercy, he will receive the spirits of such children, through the efficacy of the atonement for original sin, though they should not be baptized; and they whose duty it is to attend to this good work of

bringing children to baptism, and yet despise the *positive command*, do certainly provoke God to punish their disobedience, and may well expect some judgment to befall them, in consequence of their neglect.

I shall now proceed to a more particular examination of that very obvious question, which our Catechism proposes upon the subject of the infant's *incapacity* to receive this sacrament.

On the part of grown persons, it has been very fully shown you, that *repentance* and *faith* are absolute conditions of any benefit to be derived from the sacrament, whether we consider the case of the first proselytes to Christianity in our Saviour's time, or now, or that of those persons who have done despite to the spirit of grace, by living in habitual sin since their being baptized. All, therefore, who come to baptism after years of discretion, must heartily *repent* of all their sins, and firmly resolve never more to return to the wilful commission of them. This is fully asserted by the words of the text made choice of to the former Lecture (Matt. iii. 11), *I indeed baptize you with water unto* REPENTANCE; and (Acts, iii. 19), *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out;* where St. Peter positively determines the condition of future help (Acts, ii. 38), *Repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins, and ye shall re-*

ceive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Nothing can be clearer, than that *further* grace was the effect of the ceremony and conditions here mentioned—*repent, and be baptized.* And the faith that is equally necessary for every one to bring to this sacrament, who is arrived at years of *maturity,* is a firm belief of the whole Christian religion, but more particularly of those articles of which he is solemnly at his baptism to profess his belief to the church, according to Philip's declaration to the converted eunuch (Acts, viii. 37), who asking the Apostle what could hinder his being baptized, seeing they had the opportunity of using the *outward and visible sign of water,* Philip replied, *If thou believest in thy heart, thou mayest:* and he answered and said, *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.* Now, it being manifest past all doubt, that *positive* instruction is necessary, preparatory to this faith—(for, when Philip asked this important question, *Understandest thou what thou readest?* and the treasurer required a *guide* to *explain* to him the truth: *then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scriptures* which he had been reading, *and preached unto him Jesus);* so it furnishes this very natural inquiry, that if such a *repentance* and such a *faith* be required of all who are baptized, *why then are infants baptized, who by reason of their tender age cannot perform either of them?* It is most natural,

I say, to inquire upon what *authority*, and with what *propriety*, *their* claim to the benefits of baptism can be grounded. To this our Catechism immediately replies: *Because they promise them both* (i. e. *repentance* and *faith*) *by their sureties; which promise, when they come to age, themselves are bound to perform.*

The *proof* of the *positive* institution of *infant baptism* is abundantly supported by the word of God; to treat it with contempt, therefore (as some do), must be a very foul offence against God's merciful government of his creatures, under the Christian covenant: and as this duty is but little understood by many persons in the lower classes of life (and it is to be feared, would not be attended to so much as it is, but for a superstitious dread in *some*, and selfish principle in *others*), there is no rite in our religion that requires more to be explained and enforced. For, to profess to be Christians, and to hope for the benefits to be obtained by the *Author and Finisher of our faith*, while we are indifferent or totally regardless of fulfilling the *first* holy ordinance he ever instituted, by which to distinguish his disciples, and as the *sign* of our being entered into the body of his church and becoming part of the society of his servants, as the *means* of being rendered capable of doing him laudable service here, and of ob-

taining the rewards he has promised to all his faithful followers hereafter: — there is such a palpable inconsistency and perverseness, I say, in such conduct, that the folly and baseness of it cannot be too much exposed, nor the danger too carefully prevented. As we value the *eternal welfare* of those most dear to us, we are under an indispensable obligation to show our faith in this article, and that from this most important consideration, that a God of infinite wisdom and goodness would not have appointed a ceremony, even for *infants*, that was not attended with *valuable advantages* to them. Now, as we see, that actual faith and repentance are required of *all* that are baptized, as we must feel in ourselves the *need* of God's grace to excite and qualify these Christian virtues, the expediency of the *earliest* experience of this gift must be very evident to any who will allow themselves to think at all upon the subject; for, an ordinance which represents the cleansing of the soul from sin, by an *outward* sign, as baptism is described to do, in this sense may be peculiarly applied to the case of *infants*, who, as they are by that sacrament washed from the defilement of *original* sin, so they would be incapable of standing before God, without the blessing of an *atonement*. But further, as it signifies the *inward spiritual* wash-

ing, whereby the gifts and graces of the Spirit, signified by the *outward* sign, are really and actually bestowed, therefore to deprive children of this *means of grace*, is to acknowledge ourselves perfectly heathenish and unbelievers. It is testifying that we can do as well in a state of *nature*, as a state of *grace*, and absolutely rejecting the early influence of the Spirit, by which alone the virtue of repentance, and our progress in faith, can be assured.

Now, repentance and faith being indispensable conditions of salvation, who, with any sense of Christian duty, would be so rash as to subject others to the loss of that aid which they, from continual experience, must feel they stood so much in need of? Those who can quiet their consciences, by trusting to the *un*covenanted mercy of God in his dealings with *infants* dying without committing *actual* sin, should nevertheless take care that they are put in a way of obtaining the necessary and future help they will require to make them escape the power of sin, and grow in godliness; for, as persons capable of understanding, are obliged to profess their *faith*, and show their *repentance*, before they are proper candidates for baptism, so the principles of our religion render it incumbent, that children should engage to do the same, as soon as they shall be *capable* of it. But this

as they cannot do with their *own consent*, Christ has appointed in his church that it should be done *for* them by *suretyship*.

The objection that might be made, of any one promising for *another* in so serious an engagement, is removed by the authority of Scripture; for, as we read in Deut. xxix. 11, 12, that *all* the people were presented before the Lord, to enter into his covenant, wherein the *little* ones of all ranks are expressly mentioned, as well as the *grown* persons (for whom, of course, their parents and relations *engaged)*; so, upon a supposition of Christian charity, we may infer with still *stronger* assurance, that children, born of Christian parents, and under a security of being bred up to a sense and knowledge of their duty in this particular, and of the great obligations upon them to fulfil it, will, in due time, take care, with God's help, so to order both their *faith* and *manners*, as their best interest as well as duty require of them.

Now, as baptism is the *sign* of the *Christian* covenant with God, as circumcision was of the *Jewish*, a stronger and more applicable argument cannot be advanced for the exercise and virtue of *infant* baptism; for, as we read in Gen. xvii. 12, 13, that God expressly ordered the children of the Jews to be admitted into covenant with him at *eight* days old, there is the same good reason why our children should be

early admitted into the *Christian*, as why the Jews' children have been entered into the *legal* covenant. God, we see, has made *no exception* in this particular. *Our* infants are certainly as *capable* of *covenanting* as *theirs* were; the virtue of it by *proxy*, in one case, must be equally sufficient as in the other; and if God was pleased to receive them in this manner into his legal covenant, and did not account the incapacity of their tender age as any hinderance from the benefits of circumcision, surely we ought not to think the same defect any warrantable objection to keep infants from being baptized, and thereby received into the *Gospel* covenant; for baptism has succeeded, by divine appointment, in the place of *circumcision*, as the *Gospel* has in the place of the *law*; and, as legal ceremonies ended at the coming of Christ, so the *circumcision made without hands* (as the Apostle observes in Col. ii. 11, 12), *is the putting off the body of the sin of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ*; i. e. *the being buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the* FAITH OF THE OPERATION OF GOD, *who hath raised him from the dead*; and thus by *faith* baptism becomes a *sign*, *seal*, or *pledge* that we are in covenant with God, through the merits of Christ's death, and that the sure promises are ours on fulfilling the *condition*. This is necessary for you always to keep

in mind, or you destroy the very nature and meaning of a covenant; for, if absolute obligation is not laid on the party to fulfil the terms of the engagement, there would be no necessity to apply for the means of doing it. Though we are insufficient of ourselves, we must show an inclination to be helped, and make *use* of the help likewise; for, if the children, in whose names these solemn vows are promised in baptism, do not perform the same, in that case the covenant made in their behalf is certainly void, and so, by not fulfilling what was promised for them, they will lose all those blessings which God would otherwise most certainly have bestowed upon them.

The objection, therefore, that has been made by some, that it seems more reasonable to stay till persons are grown up, and so in a condition to make the covenant themselves, before they were permitted to be christened, is entirely defeated by the absolute necessity of the earliest possible growth in virtue, and which this positive institution of our Saviour is calculated to produce; for, in the above case, it is evident that people must live a considerable time in the actual commission of many trespasses and sins, without the benefit, either of the promise made in baptism for original sin, or of the preventing and assisting grace that may be expected through that sacrament, as indispensably essential to the checking the natural budding of vice, and

helping the victory over it. Such doctrines are perfectly antichristian; for, in that case, we should have no actual security for the happy state of those who die before baptism. Indeed, it is not for such imperfect, short-sighted creatures as we are, to determine what is best, but to comply with what God in mercy has directed us to do. He cannot err. He has graciously appointed infant baptism as the means of our being made members of his church, and Christian covenant, and of keeping the terms of it: and the measure is as agreeable to sound reason, as it is established by divine revelation; for, to repeat what has been already said, in fewer words, it was necessary, after the fall of the creature, that it should be redeemed, or it never could have appeared in the presence of an all-perfect Being. Infants were exposed to the curse of original sin and imperfection, no less than older persons; it therefore demonstrates the riches of God's wisdom and goodness, to appoint a method of delivering them from the wrath, to which, by a degenerated nature, they were liable. As the creature advances in years, it becomes consequently more subject to the offence of actual sin, and the curse of the law against it; it was therefore equally reasonable and merciful that provision should be made to enable us, as early as the disease appeared, to apply a remedy that would subdue its infectious,

growth, and obtain that degree of recovery which would render it capable of bearing such a state of trial as seems proper, in the wisdom of the Most High, to qualify us again for admission through the merits of the Redeemer into a future and eternal state of security and glory: for this, too, God has provided in our baptism; "*the death unto sin, and life unto righteousness,*" being the graces promised to all who will sincerely apply themselves to "*resist the world, the flesh,* "*and the devil; and to continue Christ's faithful* "*soldiers and servants to their lives' end.*"

Let us, my brethren, be thankful for that light afforded us by the instruction and principles of the truly evangelical church to which we belong; let us avail ourselves of the great privilege of Christian and infant baptism, nor be persuaded that we can receive too soon or too much of the free grace promised to us in that holy sacrament; let us be diligent in bringing our children to this font of Christ's tender love and mercy towards them, that, whether they die or live, they may be partakers of the benefits of this *first Christian covenant*, and be able to show that *seal* which he hath appointed all his humble followers to bear. Having good proof that we have *truth* and *Scripture* on the side of our profession, let us strengthen our faith daily, by constant prayer and diligent practice, that so we may fit ourselves for fulfilling the conditions,

and thereby perfect the grace bestowed upon us in our earliest years: and, in order that Christ's blessed institution of both sacraments may increase in veneration with those who call themselves after his name, let us pray for the grace and wisdom of preserving a steadiness of conduct, and profitable uniformity in subscribing to all those methods of forwarding our Master's service, which our holy Church holds out to us, founded on the spirit and letter of the Gospel, that we may establish *the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace;* and, by our vigilant example, prevent the gainsayers from disputing the genuine influence of the doctrines we profess.

To conclude, in the words of the Apostle (2 Cor. iv. 1): *Seeing, therefore, we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, let us faint not; but having renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, nor walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, let us, on the contrary, manifest the truth (and prove that we have not received the grace of God in vain), while we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God,* by abiding in the way we have been taught by those who have authority over us, and doing all in our power to recommend obedience to *all God's holy ordinances,* in those who are under our charge, and likely to be influenced by our example, either to continue

in the ordinances of the Lord blameless, or to slight and refuse to employ the means of grace, which God's providence has appointed for the direction of the ignorant, and the improvement of the well-disposed.

In proportion as we lower the value of the *outward and visible sign and means of grace*, we shall be found guilty of warring against God, who, in compassion to the infirmities of his creatures, and for the sake of peace and order in his church, has been pleased to make *such a provision* for the religious practice of the Christian community to which we belong, as may help us to grow in grace and all godliness of living. If once the sober use of forms is given up, it is impossible to know how far the mischief of innovation may extend; and, though they may be abused, the design and benefit of them is no less real on that account. Whatever may be proved to be of God's appointment, or consistent with his holy word, cannot be too highly honoured, or too earnestly encouraged. The subtlety of our great enemy is in nothing deeper than in the various ways in which he tempts our spiritual pride. Transforming himself into the appearance of an *angel of light*, he beguiles us frequently from the right way: by magnifying us in our own eyes, by suggesting the value of a false and furious zeal, and by inclining us from the safe and middle way, he

involves us in the labyrinth of self-will and other fatal errors, as dangerous in the end, though not so glaring, as formality and hypocrisy.

In the institution of the Lord's day, and other Christian ordinances, our Maker and Redeemer would keep us in a safe path. Let us be content with his appointments, and faithful and constant in attending upon them, and then we have no reason to fear but they will produce a saving effect, and lead us in a regular course, and, in God's good time, to the full happiness they are calculated to produce. May God give them this blessed effect on all present, through the merits and mediation of Him who is the life, and the way, and the end, even Jesus Christ the Righteous. To whom, &c.

LECTURE XLIX.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

PART I.

MATTHEW, XXVI. 26, 27, 28.

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it (or gave thanks), *and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.*

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins.

Again, Christ asserts, in the 6th chapter of St. John and 53d verse, *Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you;* that is, no spiritual grace, no power of bringing forth fruits meet for repentance, and acceptable to God on Christian principles. Here, in St. Matthew's Gospel, as likewise in those of Mark and Luke, you have the very date and form of the *positive* institution as delivered by the divine Author of it *himself*. And

from St. John's Gospel you are again informed by our blessed Lord, of the virtue conveyed by the institution, and of the consequence of neglecting to obey Christ's commands respecting it—*ye have no life in you.*

In discoursing upon this subject, I take it for granted I am addressing persons who have partaken of the benefits of the *first* Christian sacrament (the holy rite of baptism), who are convinced of the inherent weakness and depravity of their mortal nature, through the taint of *original sin*; and, like persons afflicted with a sore and inveterate disease, are anxiously looking out for *a cure*, and ready to embrace the happy means of being relieved. In other words, I suppose myself speaking to persons who acknowledge they have neglected and abused the degree of grace and favour shown them at their baptism; and who (alarmed at the sight of the heavy burden of their sins, and the dreadful consequence *without pardon)* confess their unworthiness and insufficiency for any thing that is good, and are inclined to cry out in the distress and sincerity of their heart, *Lord, what shall we do to be saved?*

To the depth of God's wisdom, and the riches of his goodness, there are no bounds. That his creatures might not be launched into a sinful and dangerous state, at an age when

they must necessarily be exposed, by the inheritance of an evil disposition, to innumerable temptations, and that they might not fall victims to the sentence of his rigid justice in case they were left under the curse of sinful imperfection, he most graciously provided a remedy for the inevitable consequence of original impurity, even before the commission of actual sin: *Christ having been slain in the counsel of God, before the foundation of the world, for those who died, without having sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression.* And that those, who, in the order of his providence, were to remain on this stage for further trial for immortal happiness, and the magnifying his glory in various ways, might not want every check to the malignant tendency of their nature, nor be without every assistance necessary to support and forward them in this warfare, from the earliest period of their being accountable for their actions, the grace of God's Spirit was promised to the faithful observers of those holy institutions, which should be competent to afford every relief that dependent and imperfect creatures might need, and humbly apply for. All, therefore, who are born under the happy dispensation of the Gospel, have the privilege of *baptism* held forth to them in an eminent degree by the particular appointment of that sacrament. And as for such, who, in the wisdom

of the Almighty, do either live or die out of the strict covenant of the Gospel grace, they will yet have the benefit of Christ's all-sufficient atonement applied to them, and will be finally judged according to the light of *reason* and *conscience* vouchsafed for their direction, according to their sincere obedience under the *measure* of that light they have *received.* Thus much is necessary to be understood concerning the virtue of Christ's satisfaction for *the sins of the whole world,* and shows the meaning of that saying, that *many should come from the east and from the west, and sit down in the kingdom with Abraham, &c. while the children of the kingdom should be cast out into outer darkness.* The reason of which is clear from another passage of Scripture, which declares, that where *the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature* (that is, the light of conscience) *the things contained in the law, they having not the law, are a law to themselves* (Rom. ii. 14); *for they show the law written in their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness.* And the truth of this doctrine the Apostles further confirm, in saying, *that there is no respect of persons with God, but that glory, and honour, and peace, shall happen to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile, in the day that God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.* Our blessed Lord, there-

fore, we see, is made the universal Judge; and as, after man's fall from innocency, no degree of good could be written in the heart, but by the renewal of the gift through Christ, so, in the truest sense, the *Sun of righteousness may so far be said to have shined upon all men unto salvation*.—Thus much (by the way) for the case of mankind, to whom neither the knowledge of the law nor the Gospel has been vouchsafed. But as to the state of *Christians, their* privileges being *greater*, their *account* will be *heavier*. And here God's compassion still keeps pace with his other favours and distinctions: for, foreseeing that man would continue to *abuse* the freedom of his will; that, as a miserable, frail creature, the assaults of the devil, the world, and the flesh, would overwhelm him, notwithstanding the gracious provision, which, in the order of God's dealings with his creatures, was intended to assist them in the conflict; HE therefore, knowing that, however *willing the spirit, the flesh is weak*, and mercifully desiring that *all* might have an opportunity of *coming to the knowledge of the truth, that none should perish, but that all should be saved*; hath most graciously furnished *another* means of grace, whereby even they who *have* been entered into Christ's church, but have not profited by the privileges and blessings of the first sacrament appointed by his beloved

Son; might yet avail themselves of his free mercy in Jesus Christ, and *renew* the promise and vows made by and for them at their *baptism*, and enter into a fresh convenant or engagement with their Maker and Redeemer, on terms no less reasonable and gracious than the former. And this is the design, my brethren, of the *holy Sacrament*, or Christian ceremony I am now about to explain to you—a provision so abounding in *wisdom*, *mercy*, and *compassion*, that nothing but *infinite love* could have ordained it. But, *God is love;* and therefore he has left no means untried to reform and save his fallen creatures.

In my method of treating the subject of this holy ordinance (so interesting to every Christian to understand, and to apply to his own case), I shall follow the exact order of our Church Catechism, as to the account there given of it. Our first inquiry, therefore, shall be, why this sacrament is called the *Lord's Supper?* The reason for this title is very evident, though, with equal propriety, it may admit of many others, as I shall take occasion to inform you in the proper place. For, *first*, it having been instituted at the hour of the last meal in the day, which is commonly called *supper*, and which was the *last* that our blessed Lord made before his suffering, it is, by way of distinction, called the *Lord's Supper;* for thus the Evangelist St. Matthew speaks of it (xxvi. 26, 27):

And as they were eating (says he), *Jesus took bread and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take, eat; this is my body. And he also took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it.* The same account is delivered by St. Mark, xiv. 22. It has also *another* claim to that title, in that it was designed to succeed in the place of the *paschal* supper among the Jews, which was a prophetic type or figure of the actual sacrifice of the Lamb of God (Jesus Christ) *without spot or blemish*, for the sins of the whole world, and of which the deliverance from the Egyptian bondage was in comparison but a slender mercy. As, therefore, a lamb was to be slain, in *remembrance* of the Israelites' escape from their cruel taskmasters; so was this holy supper or sacrament appointed, in order to *continue* a remembrance of that much *more important* deliverance from the slavery of sin, and the second death, then about to be perfected by the offering up of Christ upon the cross. And to show you how close a figure it was of this astonishing event, it is worthy your observation, that our Lord was offered on the very month, and day, and hour, that was foretold, and on which the *passover*, or paschal lamb, was to be *slain*.

If the curious or scrupulous require a reason *why*, as our Lord appointed this sacrament

at such a season, we do not observe the same as exactly as any other parts of his institution, we may readily and soundly reply, that it is no more *necessary* for us so to do, than that we should take our own supper before it, or that we should only celebrate it once a year, in an upper room, in an eating posture, and the like. Our blessed Lord, in the council of unerring wisdom, chose that peculiar season and occasion for the institution, which he judged most solemn and affecting—the last *farewell* of his disciples—and just before his crucifixion; and it is very reasonable to conclude, no other time could have been so proper for impressing their memories with the cause of it. It is equally obvious that he did not intend thereby to oblige us to celebrate it in all the exact circumstances of time, place, and posture, that the particular case of his own administering it rendered so expedient, because no valuable purpose can be answered by it to us, in so doing, *now*, equal to what the disciples received from these singular circumstances.

The main question that concerns us to be resolved is, "*Why was this sacrament of the "Lord's Supper ordained?*" Our Church informs us, "*It was for the continual remembrance "of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of "the benefits which we receive thereby.*" Now, this very reason points out to us that no time or

season could be so properly appointed, as just previous to that sacrifice *taking place*. By this answer of our Catechism we also are informed how the remembrance of this event differs in value above the remembrance of that which the *paschal* supper celebrated: for *this* was to be offered as a CONTINUAL remembrance; that is, a remembrance that was not to determine after a certain time, as the former did, but was to continue to be kept up, by the means of this holy sacrament, to the very *end of the world:* for the paschal supper, as before observed, was only a prophetic sign of this sacrament, and naturally ceased, when the thing signified was accomplished; whereas, the design of *this* memorial is to remind us of *blessings*, and convey to us *help*, which will concern the interests of the Christian world to the end of time. And for this we have the authority of Scripture; for the Apostle assures us (1 Cor. xi. 26), that *as often as we eat of this bread, and drink of this cup, we do show the Lord's death till he come;* that is, we afford visible signs of our *remembering* this wonderful instance of Christ's tender mercy towards us, which, as it will never fail till he comes to judgment, so we cannot be too constant in the use of the means of recalling to mind the *cause* of it, that we may profit in every every possible shape by the application of it: to which the testimony of the angels exactly

answers in Acts, i. 11, who, upon the Apostles gazing after their ascending Lord, declared to them, *that the same Jesus, which they then saw taken up into heaven, should so come in like manner as they saw him go into heaven.* And of the same glorious expectation Christ himself assures his followers, in John, xiv. when he comforts them with this blessed hope, that he is going to *prepare a place for them,* and that *he will come again, and receive them unto himself, that where he is, there they may be also.*

There is likewise another sense connected with this expression of *continual remembrance,* viz. that this sacrament ought not to be celebrated barely once in the year, as the passover was, but that it is necessary to be administered FREQUENTLY, so as to keep up a constant, lively remembrance in our minds, of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, which is calculated to furnish such valuable benefits to every faithful and humble partaker of this means of grace; and that this was the practice of the Christians in the first ages of the church, is evident from the following account of them, in Acts, ii. 46, where we are informed, that *they continued with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house;* that is, renewing these signs of their Master's sufferings for them. The same is recorded of them again, in chap. xx. ver. 7, where it appears that they repeated the

use of this holy sacrament every Lord's day, at least; for it is said, that *upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread* (that is, to celebrate the Lord's Supper in communion), *Paul took that opportunity of preaching to them.* And, lastly, we have an argument that the practice was *frequent* among them, in those words before repeated (1 Cor. xi. 26); *for, as often as ye eat this bread, and drink of this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.*

The next portion of this answer in our Church Catechism, which requires explanation, is the term, SACRIFICE OF CHRIST'S DEATH. Now, the nature and end of all sacrifices are to express *atonement, satisfaction,* or *pardon.* You must likewise be informed that all sacrifices of the law were designed merely to signify and prefigure this grand sacrifice of *Christ's death;* to keep alive the expectation of it, and prepare the people for a true faith in its all-sufficient *virtue;* for Christ, by his *dying*, became an *expiatory* sacrifice for the sins of mankind: in other words, by this satisfaction, made to the infinite justice of God, he expiated, i. e. cleansed, or did away the curse due to sin, and which, otherwise, would have *remained against it.* And this is made very clear to us by St. Peter's comparative view of the quality of the two kinds of sacrifices, in Heb. ix. 12, where he says, that it was *not by*

the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, that he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us: and he goes on (xiii. 14) to argue, that, *if the blood of bulls, or the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, could sanctify to the purifying of the flesh, much more must the flesh and blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, be sufficient to purge our consciences from dead works, to serve the living God;* for, by the sacrifice or submission of Christ's will to the will of the Father, as intimated in chap. x. 10, *we are sanctified* (or made holy and acceptable to God) *through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all.*

The faith, then, which this holy sacrament is intended to hold out to us, you must plainly discern is, that Christ suffered, to obtain the forgiveness of our sins, which is an article of such vast importance for us continually to keep in mind, that it is impossible too earnestly to enforce the use of this invaluable means of grace; and as, *without* an interest in his death, we cannot possibly be forgiven, it surely concerns us, *above all things,* to fulfil those conditions which will put us in the way, and prepare us for partaking of this rich mercy of God in Christ; *for even hereunto were ye called,* says St. Peter (1 Ep. ii. 21), *because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow*

his steps, who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin (through the influence of his Spirit of grace), *should live unto righteousness; for by his stripes we are healed.* (Ver. 24.) And in the 18th verse of the third chapter, he speaks again to the same effect, in asserting that Christ *hath once suffered the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the Spirit.*

That Christ suffered death for the *forgiveness* of our sins, is a doctrine so precious to all Christians, who wish to *follow his steps*, and is so abundantly proved through the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles, that I need not dwell further on that point, it being the primary article of our faith to believe, that Christ took upon him the punishment due to sin, and *died to blot out the hand-writing against us*, that by his death we might be freed both from the guilt and punishment of sin; that is, in a saving degree, from the very *power*, no less than the *consequence* of sin, by his obtaining for his true disciples a superior portion of grace, to subdue its influence in our nature; for *he was delivered for our offences, and raised for our justification.* (Rom. iv. 25.) And as the same Apostle, observes (v. 10), *If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by*

his life; for God hath *made him (who knew no sin)* a *sacrifice* for it, for us, *that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*; that is, that all our power of working our justification or acceptance with God, might be attributed to his glory, and the virtue of his death and obedience in the cause.

Another important article of which this sacrament is intended to remind us, is the NECESSITY of Christ's death, in order to the perfecting this sacrifice: of this we may be assured, by the very event taking place; for God would never have sent his beloved Son into this miserable world to suffer and die, if it had not been the most for his *glory* and *our good*. But the whole tenour of the Old and New Testament confirms it; for the Prophet Isaiah, speaking of Christ's passion, declares (liii. 8—10), *that he was taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken: yea, it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief. When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands.* The Apostle also asserts (Heb. ix. 22), that *without shedding of blood there is no remission*; and this is established by the whole ordinance of sacrifice in the law. Death, therefore,

being the punishment of sin, Christ could no otherwise have freed us from death eternal, but by dying himself in *our stead*; for the consequence (if Christ had *not* died) would have been the *very same* as it is still to those who *die not in the Lord.* They not only pay the debt of nature, but are condemned to the second death; whereas they who have found an interest in their Saviour's death (through faith in his blood), although they *die here,* yet death is the gate of *life eternal* to *them.* The use of this sacrament, therefore, my brethren, is to render *us followers of God, as dear children, that we may walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.* (Eph. v. 2.)

Now, the hope of this life in Christ is strengthened by the certainty and power of his *resurrection;* for, as Christ can no more suffer, nor die, since his rising from the dead — no more shall *they* who *sleep in the Lord,* i. e. in faith of his atoning sacrifice. St. Paul (Rom. vi. 9, 10) expressly tells us, that *Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him: for in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.* And therefore, saith the Apostle (Rom. vi. 4, 5), *we are buried with him* (by the sign of baptism) *unto a death unto sin;*

that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in NEWNESS OF LIFE; *for, if we are planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also in the likeness of his resurrection:* in other words, if we obey him here, we shall be rewarded by him hereafter.

I have frequently intimated in the course of these Lectures, that my *design* in them is not to perplex you with points of controversy, but to afford an humble and plain mode of instruction upon the principal articles of Christian *faith* and *practice;* to enlarge upon and enforce the truths contained in the short but comprehensive form of that common instruction we are taught in our early years; and, as it is too often learnt merely by *rote,* and but little understood, to endeavour to supply that deficiency as much as in my power, by this method of explaining particularly, the different parts of that incomparable sketch of Christian knowledge called the Catechism. However, as we are now considering the effect of Christ's death as a sacrifice for sin ONCE OFFERED, it may not be improper to be *more full* (than on other points might seem equally necessary), in illustrating the extent of it, and by informing you, that this sacrament of the Lord's Supper is by no means to be looked upon as a *renewal* or *repetition* of Christ's sacrifice, but only a solemn *memorial,*

record, or *sign* of it. It is a holy ceremony designed so to affect our memory with what *great things our Lord Jesus Christ hath done for us*, as may help to *humble* us, to raise our *love* and *gratitude* to God, and to urge us to *repentance*, and a future life of piety and good works. By furnishing us with serious meditation on that solemn and astonishing event which occasioned the institution, it is calculated to inspire us with heavenly desires, to qualify our prayers for help, and to prepare us to receive the grace promised to a faithful and humble use of the *means* which our Maker hath in tender pity appointed for our growth in holiness.

To talk of a sacrifice, or atonement for sin, without the act of suffering, is not only contrary to all Scripture, but doing violence to *common sense*. It is absurd in the very nature of the thing; for, as every sacrifice is put in the place of the person for whom it is offered, and we see is always so treated, as that person, in strict justice, *ought* to have been, had not God been pleased to accept the sacrifice in his stead; therefore the Apostle from thence most justly concludes, that Christ could not be more *than once offered*, because he could but ONCE suffer. And to assert that Christ is *truly* and *properly again* offered for us in this holy sacrament (as the Roman church affirms), is to suppose that he can suffer in his present glorified state; which

is such a contradiction to all the principles of our holy religion, that even the sensible Papists themselves are ashamed of it. As far as sacrifice, in a general sense indeed, implies an offering of any thing to God, this sacrament may pass under that title, as the *bread and wine figuratively* may be called the *body* and *blood* of Christ. But it is both false and impious to maintain (as the Papists do of their mass), that this sacrament can possibly be considered in the nature of a *true* and *proper* sacrifice; for *here* is no suffering, which act constitutes the very essence of sacrifice, but merely the elementary signs of the action to be remembered.

In its general sense, as just now mentioned, we may likewise call it the *sacrifice* or *offering of thanksgiving* to Almighty God, for his mercies bestowed upon us, through the blood of the Redeemer. In short, the *design* of our blessed Master in this ordinance, was to leave to his church a perpetual, solemn, holy memorial of his *dying for us;* to engage us to apply for the benefits purchased for us by this wonderful instance of his love; to afford us a fresh and powerful means of grace to recover and support us under the *weakness of a fallen nature;* and, upon our *relapse* or *backsliding* into trespasses, as a gracious *remedy* against indifference and forgetfulness of the *end* of our creation; and that nothing might be wanting to prevent our

final falling off, and coming to God through Christ. As often, therefore, as we come to the Lord's table, and join in the celebration of this holy sacrament, we should keep our minds so intent upon what is there done, as to possess them with a warm sense of all the afflicting passages of our blessed Lord's passion; to consider him as there in a manner set forth crucified before our eyes; to meditate upon his mighty and condescending love, *thus dying for us*; and, above all, to impress upon our minds an abhorrence of all sin as the *cause* of his sufferings. By thus dwelling upon our great unworthiness, and the manifold benefits and blessings accruing to us by his precious blood-shedding, our hearts will become affected in a suitable manner towards him, and we may hope to profit by this act of faith and obedience to his commands.

Thus much may suffice, my brethren, at *this* time upon the subject of the Lord's Supper, and the cause of its institution, as a holy ceremony calculated to convey spiritual life to us, through due and humble dependence on the divine power of the Author and Finisher of our faith, and the all-sufficiency of the atonement or sacrifice for sin through his blood, as represented to us in the *outward* and *visible* signs of this blessed sacrament.

In the two following Lectures (which will close

the task I set myself for your instruction in the various parts of Christian knowledge comprehended in our excellent Church Catechism), I shall dwell with equal plainness and precision upon the *remaining* heads delivered therein, relative to this holy feast. In the mean time, may God give his blessing to what has now been offered to you for your information and improvement thus far. And this we beg through the efficacious influence of his Holy Spirit, who hath left us this outward sign and proof of his gracious purpose of mediating and interceding with the Father for all his faithful servants till his coming again, to reward their humble labours and obedient service. To him, the blessed Jesus, the Lord of life and glory, be ascribed all praise and power, for ever and ever. Amen.

LECTURE L.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

PART II.

1 COR. XI. 23, 24, 25.

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also, he took the cup when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

In my last Lecture upon the subject of this holy sacrament, I instructed you in what I thought was proper to be known concerning its usual title of the *Lord's Supper*, and the general design of our blessed Saviour in this institution.

We come now to consider the form of this

positive ordinance, or, in other words, the use of the outward elements, *the bread and wine appointed to be received;* and likewise our obligations, as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, to receive them *both,* in communion with each other.

Our Catechism sets forth in her first account of the sacraments in Christ's church, that every true sacrament must consist of two parts—an *outward* and an *inward* sign. This has been fully explained to you before. As reasonable members, therefore, of Christ's body the *church,* it is very proper we should now be fully instructed concerning the "*outward parts or signs* "*of the Lord's Supper.*" The doctrine of our established church informs us very plainly, that the *outward signs* which represent to us what we are ourselves to commemorate in this ceremony, are "*bread and wine, which the Lord* "*hath commanded to be received.*" And our authority for using *both* these elements is warranted by Christ's *own example* in the first institution of this sacrament; for we read in the text, that he *first took bread, gave thanks, and brake it, saying, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me:*—which last words plainly show, that Christ meant this element of bread, only as a *sign* of his body to be *broken,* both by the manner of his action, and the real state of the case. As

he had not then actually suffered, he could only speak of what *was* to happen, of which the bread then broken, and to be thus used henceforward, was to be a *significant memorial*. As though he had said, As you now see me break this bread, in *token* of the *suffering* my body is to undergo on your account, which is to be crucified, tormented, and pierced, for your sakes; so do you hereafter obey my commands, when you meet together in my name, by doing as you see me *now do, in remembrance of my love for you*. And then, after the same manner, and for the same purpose, he took the cup, *saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood; this do (as often as ye drink it) in remembrance of me*. Common sense, and the plain meaning of words, assure us, that this could only be spoken of as a SIGN or *figure* of what was to be done. And in the sense that the former expression was used, the same cup, or its *contents*, are mentioned; for it cannot possibly be understood as the new testament or covenant ITSELF, in Christ's blood, but only as *representing* it by the *nature* of the element to be received; and it is equally confined to bear that indisputable signification, by the like additional command of using it as an act of *remembrance* specified in the text (1 Cor. xi. 23, 24, 25).

The *end*, therefore, of our blessed Lord's appointing these *outward* signs of the sacrament,

appears, by the very words of the institution, to intimate that those who celebrate this sacrament, might eat of the one and drink of the other at his table, as an act of grateful recollection of his mercy towards them. To guard you against a great error of that church from which we are *reformed*, I will show you the *absolute necessity* of obeying the express command of our Lord respecting *our manner* of remembering his death; for the Roman Catholics, in defence of their denying the communion in both kinds to the *laity* (i. e. people in common, and not in holy orders), do artfully *pretend*, that as this is intended to excite in us an act of *remembrance*, a person who is devoutly inclined, may, by looking on during the minister's officiating, both commemorate Christ's death, and meditate as effectually on the benefits of it, as if he actually received the elements of bread and wine in *person*.

The *impropriety* and fallacy of this assertion may be fully exposed, by supposing another case equally absurd; and that is, if it be so, may not a person who is *not baptized*, when he sees that holy sacrament administered, be truly penitent for his sins, and believe in Christ, and desire to be regenerated and adopted into the body of Christ's church, just as well as if he were *himself* washed with the water of baptism? But we know, that, according to the ex-

press terms of the institution, the bare *looking on*, in this instance, would not entitle such a person to the grace of regeneration, nor will it any more entitle the *other* to the communion of *Christ's body and blood*; that is, to any *spiritual* life, help, or grace, conferred *alone* by *faith* in the *act* that Christ himself ordained. For in all these cases the question is, not what we think we *might* do, but what Christ has *commanded* us to do; and consequently we must *observe* what he requires, if ever we mean to be made *partakers* of what he *promises*. Now, it is impossible, by any force of words, or skill of argument, to make the *form* of his institution imply, that it is sufficient for his followers to *look on* for any valuable purpose, while the commissioned minister of his service performs the ceremony; for the *command* is plain, and impossible to be mistaken—DRINK YE ALL, EVERY ONE OF YOU, OF THIS. Some most ignorantly suppose, that, because the *Apostles* alone were *present*, Christ's *command* was binding exclusively upon *them*: but this can proceed only from want of due thought or reflection upon the nature of the ordinance itself, and the universal influence of Christ's sacrifice: for if he had intended that none but his *immediate* Apostles should have been partakers of his sacrament, it is evident, the use of it must have ceased at his *death*; or even had he intended it to be received only by

their successors, he certainly would have given *some* intimation of this *distinction*. But such weak and ill-grounded surmises as these, are at once done away by his particular revelation concerning the duty and benefits attending this holy feast, to all who bore his name, and were enlisted under his banner; male and female, young and old, of all ranks and descriptions. For St. Paul, in exhorting the Corinthians on this very subject, *declares to them what he had received of the Lord concerning it* (as expressed in the text). Nor would he have found fault with the *general* abuse in the manner of taking the Lord's Supper, if the duty of the people had been *only to look on*. If *that* had been sufficient, the practice of the early ages of Christianity would surely have given us *some* precedent for it; whereas we know that the *contrary* distinguishes *their* conduct in this particular. And when we read (Acts, xx. 7), that *the disciples came together to break bread* (that is, to celebrate the Lord's Supper), we cannot suppose this to be spoken only of the Apostles *themselves*, but, doubtless, all who had been duly instructed in so essential an article of Christian faith and practice. In short, it is enough to *mention* it, to expose the absurdity of such a conjecture; nor can we avoid wondering, that any person of good understanding, and the least Christian knowledge, can harbour

such an *erroneous fancy:* but we are glad of *any* excuse for neglecting religious duties; and it is well, if very different reasons do not keep us from our obligations in this particular part of it.

Christ died for the sins of the *whole world.* It is indisputable, that, as *all have sinned,* all must need a *share* in the benefits derived from his death; and if he, in his high wisdom, has positively appointed certain *means,* not merely as *pledges* of these benefits, but to convey them to his faithful servants, it is clearly as incumbent and necessary for one as another, to *employ* these means for obtaining these benefits, if he sincerely desires them for his growth in faith and virtue. It is as much the interest of the lowest of the people, as of the most learned prelate, to procure an interest in his Saviour's sufferings: *all* equally need a proportionable share of his grace or help; and no one can claim a just title to the *name* of Christian, who will not be at some pains to come to the knowledge of the truth, or, *knowing* it, does not *obey* it. Barely to look on, therefore, would be evidently insufficient for the purpose of this ordinance. This cannot be truly called communicating in kind. The command is express, and impossible to be mistaken—THIS DO; it is obligatory on *all* Christians, and signifies neither more nor less than EAT OF THIS BREAD, AND

DRINK OF THIS CUP, IN REMEMBRANCE OF CHRIST, through *whom alone is salvation.*

We may therefore rest assured, from the import of our blessed Lord's own words, that it is indispensably necessary that every communicant should receive this sacrament in *both kinds;* for *thus* he gave it to his disciples, and thus they received it at his hands. But there is another answer likewise ready for those who dwell upon the objection before mentioned, viz. that, as our Saviour's *first* disciples were *priests*, the command does not seem to extend immediately to the *laity:* the Roman Catholics also avail themselves of this particular, to plead their refusal of the cup to the laity: but the following observation will prove the *insufficiency* of this argument; for, first, it is very uncertain whether all who were then present at the table with our Lord were absolutely *priests.* It is more than probable that many other of our Lord's followers might have been with him on so particular an occasion. But not to insist upon this, our Saviour made no distinction between priests and lay communicants, as to the business of receiving this sacrament in *one* or *both* kinds; he gave both the bread and wine himself to *all* who were at the table; and he has left a general command to us to do the same. His words and actions together, clearly require this from all of us—that those who administer this sacrament, should administer it as Christ

did, and those who receive it, should receive it as his disciples did of him. As to the *manner of receiving*, therefore, there is no distinction between *minister* and *people* in what concerns this holy sacrament; for, when one minister receives it of another minister, it is as when they hear the word preached, there is no distinction on account of their being *priests*, but they are considered as *Christians in general*.

At the institution of this sacrament, our blessed Saviour, indeed, acted as a *priest*: he represented the minister of the church; the disciples represented the faithful of *all ages*, who were afterwards to receive this sacrament from the minister of the church, after the very same manner that they received it from Christ's own hands.

Here surely is abundant proof that we ought to take this holy ordinance in *both* kinds, and that none can be free from the obligation of communicating, who profess any relation to Christ, or respect for his commands. To trouble you with further arguments against the errors of other churches, would be needless and unprofitable. Our faith in this article is upheld by Scripture, which is all we need concern ourselves to be assured of. We will, therefore, now proceed to a more important part of instruction, viz.

"*What is the inward part or thing signified* "*in this holy sacrament?*" We are instructed by our Catechism to answer, "*The body and* "*blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed* "*taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's* "*Supper.*" These words relate to a further dispute concerning what is called TRANSUBSTANTIATION, or the actual changing of the elements of bread and wine into the glorified body in which Christ now sits at the right hand of God in heaven, which is another erroneous article of belief in the Roman Catholic church; but with these gross errors and prejudices we happily are not concerned. Of arguments and disputes upon words there is no end in the management of worldly wisdom. It is enough on this point to say, that what is contradictory to *sense*, *reason*, and *Scripture*, we cannot be expected to *believe*. All, therefore, that concerns your information, is the pure sense our Church ascribes to these words, as an object of Christian *faith*, as established by *Scripture testimony*.

Now, reason and Scripture unite to convince us, that the body and blood of Christ (that is, in other words, the effectual *benefits* of his sacrifice) are not really distributed to *every* communicant in this sacrament; for, if that were the case, every communicant, whether prepared or not, would alike receive Christ's body and

blood at the Lord's table, which would be a monstrous contradiction of the truth, since we may certainly conclude, from the lives of many who receive it, that they are *not* in possession of the benefits it is intended to convey. Our Church, therefore, justly distinguishes by whom "*it is only verily and indeed taken and receiv-*" *ed;*" and that is, by the FAITHFUL.

But the sense in which we are said "*verily* "*and indeed to take and receive the body and* "*blood of Christ,*" and how *far* we acknowledge the *real* presence of Christ's body and blood in this sacrament, remains to be more fully explained to you.

That which is given by the priest or minister, is, as to its outward substance, *bread and wine;* but, as to its *sacramental* nature and signification, it is the *figure* or *representation* of Christ's *crucified* body and blood, which was *broken* and *shed* for us. The elements do not become the *very* body and blood of Christ, in the moment of receiving and taking them as such, as the Roman Catholic church asserts to be the case, but are only to be considered (in a *spiritual* sense) as representing that sacrifice ONCE offered, which communicates (through faith in its efficacy) the benefits of the actual sacrifice upon the cross, of which all-sufficient atonement, these elements are a reviving and strengthening memorial, and which *signs* being

piously and faithfully received, as setting before us the infinite merits of Christ *thus dying for us*, do, by the blessing of God upon the act, and the grace of his Holy Spirit on our minds, so far convey the benefits of his death, that, in a *spiritual* sense, we may be truly said to *eat his flesh and drink his blood* (as, indeed, he explains it himself) in proportion as our Christian life is nourished and increased *by this faith*; and for the same reason, to those who come *unworthily* to it (that is, *carelessly* or *deceitfully*) as a matter of *form*, and in mere compliance with *customary* attendance at stated times; to such it is *so far made their condemnation*, that it renders them deserving of punishment, and, without timely and sincere repentance, will inevitably expose them to it; nevertheless, they will not be in the least excused from keeping away from it, because it is a blessed *means*, ordained by Christ, to make them better. As to the *manner* whereby these outward signs of bread and wine become, to the humble, contrite, and faithful (and so far, in *that* respect, *worthy*) communicant, "*the body and blood of Christ*, "*verily and indeed taken and received*," may be thus explained: By receiving these elements in firm assurance of Christ's *all-sufficient merits and atonement*, and of the *power* committed to him to assist and strengthen our sincere endeavours after holiness, through the influence of

the Holy Spirit, in a deep sense of our *our unworthiness* of such favour, and an humble trust that the blessing will be applied to *our own case*; they entitle the believer to a part in the sacrifice of our Saviour's death, and to the benefits thereby procured to all his faithful and obedient servants.

Faith, my brethren, or a devout and hearty *persuasion* of these important truths, is the *only* principle that can qualify a communicant to take and receive the body and blood of Christ in this sacrament, to any *saving* purpose. By this means, they who come worthily to the holy table; that is, in the manner before mentioned, as weak, sinful, and dependent creatures are expected to come (for none can come worthily in the strict sense of that word), confessing their insufficiency, and imploring mercy and help: all such are as truly entitled to a share in Christ's sacrifice, by partaking of the outward elements of *bread and wine* then delivered to them, as any person is entitled to an estate, by receiving a deed of conveyance from one who has power to deliver it for his use: and the only possible reason that can be alleged why the intended effects of this holy sacrament are not equally visible in all, is the difference of faith in some, or total deficiency of it in others, who communicate. And this leads us to consider the particular BENEFITS, whereof those

who receive this sacrament as they should do, "*are made partakers thereby.*"

This we are further told in the words of our Church, is the "*strengthening and refreshing of* "*our souls by the body and blood of Christ, as* "*our bodies are by the bread and wine.*"

Now, the frequent receiving of this holy sacrament will appear to be materially conducive to this end, if we seriously weigh our miserable state by nature, and that, by being liable continually to fall, we stand in need of seasonable help to recover and support us in future; that is, so to be strengthened, as that, after having done *all*, we may be able to stand our ground, being refreshed with a cheering hope of pardon; wherefore, the receiving the body and blood of Christ with penitent hearts, a living faith, and holy dispositions, will produce this fresh strength we require to recruit our fainting and desponding spirits. To the humble and sincere Christian, these must be allowed most *precious benefits*; and, that all may be encouraged never to neglect such valuable means of grace, we are further assured, that the virtue of Christ's sacrifice, and all the benefits of his sufferings and resurrection, or, in the words of the Catechism, the inward power promised us, by a due receiving of the BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST, will as effectually nourish our souls, and contribute to their health, as the use of the bread and wine is

instrumental to the support of our bodily vigour. *The words that I speak to you, they are spirit and life,* says Christ, when explaining the sense of his *giving his flesh to eat, and his blood to drink.* To confirm this truth, many useful applications remain yet to be delivered to you, and which time obliges me to defer till the next Lecture, with which I shall conclude the whole subject. In the mean time, may God give his blessing to what has been said, for the sake of Jesus Christ; to whom, &c.

LECTURE LI.*

ON THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

PART III.

The same Text.

THIS Discourse having been extended to considerable length, from my wish to afford you the fullest instructions on the subject, I have divided it into three parts; and as it contains matter of the greatest importance to your eternal welfare, I request your serious attention to what remains of it. I left off at that very interesting part which particularly describes the *sense* in which we are said VERILY AND INDEED (that is, really and truly) TO RECEIVE THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST, *in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper;*

* Upon referring to Vol. II. p. 1 and 17, it will be perceived that Lecture XVII. is divided into two separate Discourses: so that although the present Lecture is numbered LI. it is, in fact, the 52d, and completes the author's design of supplying an exposition of the Church Catechism for every Sunday in the year.

and how far, and in what an unexceptionable sense, we acknowledge the *presence* of Christ, as differing from the gross and erroneous doctrine of the church of Rome. And as in this method of instructing you, I do not study elegance of expression so much as conviction and profit, I shall not spare words to give you the fullest sense of so valuable an instrument for the advancement of your religious improvement; to which good end, some *repetitions* will be unavoidable.

The receiving this holy sacrament, you must always understand, *so* strengthens your souls, as that it conveys *new* confirmation to you every time you take it, of God's infinite *mercy* towards you, through the mediation and for the *sake* of his Son Jesus Christ; and as the Almighty cannot *lie*, and the merits of our Lord have satisfied the severity of God's justice against an imperfect and unprofitable race of creatures, the *belief* of this fortifies us more and more, both in the discharge of our duties, and to resist all such temptations and attacks as may be made against us by the different enemies of our souls in this *state of trial*. It strengthens us also in *another* material respect; for, being thus secured of an interest in the Saviour's sacrifice for us, all doubts flowing from the consciousness of our insufficiency to *merit* salvation, are happily *removed:* we are thereby

supported against all fear of present danger or suffering for the cause of religion, which if it is in God's wisdom appointed us to undergo, *we shall reckon it not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us*, when we are free from the prison of this sinful body: in short, it strengthens us against the fear of death itself; for this sacrament, if properly received, will teach us to consider *that* as a passage only to a most *blessed* and *everlasting* life. These being such necessary and inestimable benefits, all that remains is to put you in a way of *obtaining* them, or, in other words, to inform you what that *preparation* is which will qualify you to cherish a good hope of *experiencing* their blessed effects. Now, that which is absolutely REQUIRED OF THOSE WHO COME TO THE LORD'S SUPPER, you know, our Catechism declares to be this: THAT THEY SHOULD EXAMINE THEMSELVES, WHETHER THEY REPENT THEM TRULY OF THEIR FORMER SINS, STEADFASTLY PURPOSING TO LEAD A NEW LIFE, &c.

Before we proceed to the more particular points of examination, I will beg leave to offer a few words, as to the *seasons* and *manner* of it in *general*. When it should be done, must be obvious to all *thinking persons*. Much is it to be wished that we could all be persuaded to *live* under a *constant practice* of this exercise, and consider every week, or indeed every *day*, how

our accounts stand with God: this would powerfully assist towards CONTINUAL preparation: but at least, if we neglect it at *other* times, yet certainly we are to do it very nicely and scrupulously, before we come to the holy table. And this supplies *another* benefit, in that it is so solemn a call to *self-examination* and *repentance*. *Examine yourselves* (saith the Apostle) *whether ye be in the faith. What, know ye not your own selves?* (2 Cor. xiii. 5.) Alas! my brethren, if each of us do only put the question to *ourselves this moment*, *How* are *we now* prepared to stand before God? it will loudly speak the *necessity* of looking about us: and, when so convinced, the *manner how* this examination should be made, will *readily present itself*. We should carefully and diligently search into the principles and conduct of our lives and actions, whereby we may come to some profitable knowledge what the state of our soul is. Respecting the various particulars on which we are directed by our Church, and the rule of Christ's Gospel, to examine ourselves, we should accompany the act with earnest prayer to God for his assistance *in*, and blessing *upon*, our own endeavours.

The *first* point of *self*-examination that is mentioned in the Catechism is, WHETHER WE REPENT US TRULY OF OUR FORMER SINS. It will not be sufficient to *say* we *repent* of them, but

we must repent of them TRULY. In order to know whether we *do* this so *effectually* as is here required of us, there is but *one* method of judging, which is by the present frame and disposition of our souls: *e. g.* if we are *heartily sorry* for, and *ashamed* of our sins—if we fully *confess* them, and earnestly desire God's forgiveness of them, as having been expressly and perversely committed against *his holy laws;* if we are *constant* in our prayers for pardon, and where we have done any injury to our neighbour, if we are ready to ask *his* forgiveness also, and to make him all reasonable satisfaction in our power; if, as far as we can judge of *ourselves*, we do all this *uprightly* and *sincerely* (which can be done only through *God's help*), and which may be proved by the *ease* and *readiness* of our doing it: again, if we do not wilfully retain any secret design of any sin in our souls, but universally resolve, by God's grace, to forsake all our evil ways, with which conscience reproaches us, and in all things to follow the *known rule* of our duty; we may then justly conclude, that our repentance and resolutions are *sound*, and void of hypocrisy, and such as will qualify us for the *worthy* (that is, the *safe*) receiving of this holy sacrament, as far as imperfect and unworthy creatures *at best*, can be *so* esteemed.

But we are still in the *body;* we shall be

weak all the days of our *lives:* unless God upholds us, we shall fall and trespass *continually*. What shall we say then, if, notwithstanding this good work begun, we again relapse into sin? Why, our case, *then*, will depend upon *circumstances*. I trust we may be permitted here to distinguish. If we transgress through surprise, if our fall is marked by the lesser sins of *infirmity*, and such as in certain cases are difficult *altogether to be avoided;* if our faults are not *wilful* and *premeditated*, we certainly ought not to be discouraged, but persist in applying for *more* grace to *Him* who is *mighty to save*. But if, after coming to this *knowledge of the truth*, we should be guilty of some *violent*, *deliberate*, and *infectious* acts of sin, and especially if we should *return* to a *habit* and *course* of such sins, this would be of most dangerous consequence to us. It would furnish alarming doubts whether we were *ever* justified and converted, and certainly would render our *last* state worse than the *first;* and with a faithless fear of such a condition, for want of due confidence in the Rock of their salvation, and from too much dependence on *themselves*, many falsely suppose it the safest way rather to keep *altogether* from the Lord's table, than to run the hazard of thus coming to it, as they suppose, *unworthily*.

Now, were it a matter of indifference, whether Christians received this sacrament or not,

this conduct might boast some show of argument in it: but as the case really is, it is wholly idle and absurd, and that for these plain, unanswerable reasons; for, first, to COME TO THE LORD'S SUPPER, IS A MATTER OF POSITIVE DUTY IN EVERY CHRISTIAN. Christ has expressly *commanded* us to do it; and it is, therefore, *equally* dangerous not to come *at all*, as to come unworthily to it, in a mistaken sense of that word; for,

Secondly, By *not* coming, people absolutely deprive themselves of the grace of God, which is necessary to *prevent* the very conduct they fear to be guilty of, and which grace this sacrament was purposely ordained to *convey* to them; so that, in this neglect, they refuse the greatest *present* benefit, as well as comfort to their souls, by fulfilling that duty which the Christian religion has provided for them. To which we may add,

Thirdly, That, considering the shortness and uncertainty of life, we ought, on that account, to make the same preparation for the hour of death, that we are required to do for coming to the holy sacrament. And in *this* (as I believe I before observed) the essential value of the institution is most evident; since men are so very apt to put both the thoughts of death and their *provision* for it *afar off*. It is a mark of the great mercy and tender love of our Sa-

viour Christ towards us, to appoint such a solemn *remembrance* of them, as, by frequent exercise and due preparation, will assist as a *means* to keep the soul always in such a state as will fit it for the change of death, should his creature unworthily be surprised by the common fate of mortals.

The next particular our Church enjoins, as a necessary article of examination to fit us for this duty, is, whether we have a LIVELY FAITH IN GOD'S MERCY THROUGH CHRIST? The meaning of which question is, Whether we do *steadfastly believe*, that if we truly repent us of our sins, according to the terms of the Gospel covenant, God will not only most certainly forgive them, but does here in this very sacrament confirm and *seal* afresh, his part of the covenant with us, by making us *partakers* of the benefits of that redemption which our blessed Master purchased for us by the shedding of his blood upon the cross. In short, this includes that essential article of Christian faith, which assures us we are *freely justified* through Christ, and that he is the *truth*, the *life*, and the *way*; that *in* him, and *by* him, we have salvation; that he is the *sole cause* both of the *means* and the *end*. This, my brethren, is an unavoidable part of examination, to be *clear* in, because it is the *ground* of all we can *do* or *hope* for. Well, therefore, may this be called a LIVELY FAITH,

because it shows that our faith is *then* only acceptable to God, and profitable to ourselves, when it is *such* as he has prescribed for us, to *pray* for, and cultivate, both by his Son's life and doctrine; and also, because such a faith as this will prove itself *lively* or *active*, in that it will work in us a sincere repentance of our past sins, and such a constant and uniform obedience to God's commandments, as our Lord in his Gospel requires of us, and which puts it past all doubt, that we have the true faith that works *by love*, and brings forth fruits agreeable to its own nature. For, indeed, unless we have *this faith*, merely to *know* the truth, and to assent to it, as it is an object of reasonable and historical proof, unless our *lives* are *agreeable* to the same, *this* will carry us no further than the very worst of men may go, and even the devils themselves (as St. James observes), since even *they believe* and *tremble*.

The natural consequence of *such* a faith, presents us with the next particular of our previous examination before we receive this Holy Communion; and that is, whether we have a "*thankful remembrance of Christ's death?*" If the faith before described, hath taken ever so *little* possession of the *heart*, we cannot avoid being *grateful* for this astonishing instance of divine mercy towards helpless, sinful dust and ashes. And that this incumbent affection of our

souls may be stirred up to *action*, the *form* of the ceremony is expressly designed to set before us the awful circumstances of this *sacrifice*. We should, therefore, search our hearts, whether we are *truly sensible* of this infinite love of God, and the unparalleled condescension of *Jesus Christ* thereby declared to us: whether we are duly careful to keep up in our minds, a lively memory of his death and passion, and strive accordingly, in some measure, to prove our hearty sense of these unspeakable blessings he has been pleased to purchase for us at so *dear a rate*. And lastly, it is declared most highly expedient by our Church, *that we examine*, "WHETHER WE "ARE IN CHRISTIAN CHARITY WITH ALL MEN." *This* good proof of our soul's state is absolutely *indispensable*, to render us meet guests of our Lord's heavenly banquet: the *whole tenour* of the Gospel pleads for this qualification: *With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: what ye would men should do unto you, do the same unto them; if ye forgive not your brethren their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses*, &c. All which precepts of Christian charity, or love, imply thus much, that we are not only *freely to forgive* those who may have done us any injury, but we are to be so entirely friends with them, as to be ready and willing to do *them* all the kindness we can, if

it falls in our way, and that as sincerely and heartily as if they had *never offended us*. And this likewise must flow from the pure principle of our *love to God*, and the consciousness of *what we deserve* from *his* hands, if he were *extreme to mark* what is done amiss. We are, therefore, not to harbour a particle of revenge against our *bitterest* enemies *(for vengeance is the Lord's, he will repay)*, but to imitate the goodness of our heavenly Father, and prove ourselves instruments in his hands, of *good to the just and the unjust;* to consider all men as *his* creatures, and we as his *stewards* of the good things of this life. And as we must be sensible, that, but for his grace, we might have been as sinful as any other people, and are actually still very unworthy in having abused the many and superior talents we have received, we must keep in mind the dreadful state of the ungodly in another life, and pray as earnestly for *their* recovery as our *own*, considering that Christ died for *them*, as well as for *ourselves*, and that he can *cast us out* and take *them to favour*, if we do not fulfil the conditions, and abide by the precepts, of his everlasting counsel. It is *this* virtue, therefore, that covereth * the multitude

* Not that all the cardinal virtues put together, can make any satisfaction or atonement for our own sins; but by the expression of *covering* them, must be understood the

of sins, as mentioned by St. Peter; that causes us to overlook the trespasses against *us* through universal good-will; and upon which St. Paul bestows such just encomiums, and plainly declares, that every other fruit of faith, *without charity is nothing worth.* If the spirit of Christian love has, in no degree, visited and warmed our heart, we are cold and poor indeed. In short, *God is love;* and to enjoy him, we must experience and imitate the essential attributes of his nature: for, as we are told that we are to be made *partakers* of the divine nature, it is in *this* life indisputably that we must be *prepared* for the *inheritance.*

These are the *inward* and *essential* preparations needful to fit us for a *profitable* attendance on this solemn rite of our most holy

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purity of our Christian conduct towards each other, in that *this* species of charity causes us to hide, or *cover*, or forgive, the various trespasses of our offending brother. If we have been offended, we must *forgive;* this is charity:—if *we* have offended, we must sue for reconciliation; this is charity. It may unfortunately happen, that the party with whom we may be at variance, may not be equally disposed to cultivate this Christian temper: our only part, in this case, will be, to pray that he may feel the same good disposition towards us, as we do towards him. More cannot be expected or employed to compose our minds, and prepare us for a safe receiving of this blessed feast, according to the injunction in the last member of the reply, viz. "TO BE IN CHARITY "WITH ALL MEN."

religion: other outward exercises may be useful, but with these we shall be safe; for example, acts of prayer, and of that other sort of charity, which consists of deeds of mercy to our neighbour; of retirement from business, and the common intercourse with the world, and especially from its follies and vanities: and even occasional exercises of private self-denial and abstinence may be practised by many to great advantage, and to the promoting the virtues I have already mentioned. But these must be governed by the rules of prudence, as every man's affairs, time, opportunities, necessities, or as health and other circumstances will allow of.

These several preparations are not so absolutely required, but that we may venture to come without them; since, if they are too closely insisted on, they will savour of *formal*, instead of spiritual worship, and throw a stumbling-block in our way. For the satisfaction, therefore, of all who cannot adopt such means of preparation, we may safely assert, that those who live in a strict and regular course of Christian life and manners, and have nothing very extraordinary to disturb their pious meditations; as they always know what their state towards God is, so are they always ready to receive the holy Sacrament, and need not be afraid on any occasion to partake

of it, although they had not the opportunity of making any *particular* preparation as before described. But even such pious Christians as these, when under the resolution of attending at any stated times, will do well to observe something of the kind above mentioned, in order to their coming with still better disposition.

And that you may want no manner of instruction on this very important and much-neglected duty, I will conclude with an answer to another difficulty, that may perhaps present itself to the timid and scrupulous Christian; viz. that supposing a well-meaning person should not be able to satisfy himself concerning his worthiness, or proper preparation to go to the Lord's table; in that case, it becomes his duty to consider well, what it is that raises these doubts in him, how far the artful designs of the tempter, and the treachery of his own corrupted nature, may be concerned in them; and having so done, let him take the advice of some person whom he can trust, but especially of his minister, about it, that so he may be delivered from his scruples, and not fall into the snare of the grand enemy, but may come with a quiet mind, and a full persuasion of conscience that he is doing his duty, and accepting the gracious means of growing more and more perfect in the knowledge and performance of it.

And if, on a faithful examination, after all the rules here laid down by the Church, any person shall apprehend that he is not in a safe state to appear at this holy table, he must then for the present refrain; but be sure it be only for the purpose of gaining more steadiness and calmness of mind, and of removing the objection his conscience presents to him, and not as a trifling excuse to stay away. Let him strictly follow the rule advanced Matt. v. 23, 24, if he have any dispute with his neighbour, to endeavour to be reconciled to him, before he comes to the altar; or, as intimated chap. xxii. ver. 11, if he has not on a fit *garment* for the feast, that is, if he does not possess an humble, meek, forgiving spirit, a thorough sense of his being wholly unworthy of admission to the wedding, in his very best dress or state of mind, let him pray and strive for suitable tempers—let him make all the haste he can to remove these hinderances, and reconcile himself to God, that so he may be prepared to come as worthy as is possible, and to be made partaker of those graces and helps which are thereby communicated to every faithful receiver. For, after all, the *utmost worthiness* sinful creatures can attain to, is a deep sense of their *great unworthiness* of such an honour and kindness.

And now, my brethren, having by God's favour completed the task I proposed to myself for

your weekly instruction during one *whole year*, it remains only, that I most earnestly and humbly beg God's blessing on this exertion for your improvement in Christian knowledge, and the spiritual welfare of us all. Whatever of good is in this work, to God *be all the praise;* whatever of *error* it may contain, as I humbly trust it is the effect of human weakness, *not design*, I rely on the mercy of our blessed Redeemer to *pardon* it; and may you have grace to perceive nothing but what may tend to promote your advancement in all manner of godliness and Christian knowledge. But, before I dismiss you, I cannot forbear offering a few remarks that suggest themselves as not improper on this occasion; of the truth and value of them, yourselves must be the judges: I will only answer for the sincerity of the intention in submitting them.

I have now finished these *fifty-two* Lectures on our Church Catechism, with what good effect to my hearers, must be left to God's blessing on their attentive application. *All* that has been delivered and heard, may possibly not have been *digested;* but they who would not vouchsafe to *hear*, cannot complain if they remain in *ignorance*. The opportunity has been afforded them—the *season* has been convenient to them; and they know I have ever been as willing to give them all *private* assistance, as

public information. It is true, I have not had the encouragement to proceed, which, from my pure desire for the general welfare, might have been expected; but as I am convinced it is an *indispensable* duty in a pastor, to prevent as much as possible the great disadvantage of ignorance in his flock, I determined, with God's blessing, that nothing should be wanting on my part to discharge this duty carefully. None can be insensible of their want of knowledge as to many essential parts of faith and *practice*, no less than the various infirmities they labour under from a depraved imperfect nature. *Faith*, they know, *cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God:* unless they ask, they have no promise that they shall receive; unless they seek, they cannot expect to find, but by frequent application to the throne of grace and mercy; they have good hope held out to them, that they will be both *heard* and *succoured:* the *means* of grace, therefore, to every rational and truly serious person, must be reckoned valuable. Inexpressibly happy, most undoubtedly, should I esteem myself, could I prove instrumental to the general spiritual comfort of my hearers. But as *God* must dispose the heart, we are only answerable for the sincerity of our endeavours and the faithfulness of our trust. It concerns our own salvation, to provide against this dreadful accusation, when we

meet face to face at the last assize, that our people say not, We had a teacher, but were never taught by him. This, I trust, will never appear against me. However negligent, therefore, many are in profiting by the opportunities of instruction, I magnify the goodness of God, that hath strengthened me with resolution to persevere in labouring for your good. And though, where the harvest is *plentiful*, it cannot fail to fill the soul with joy and gladness, yet, as the *increase is from above*, like the temporal husbandman, we must be content with the ability of doing our indispensable part, and leave the *increase* to the Lord. If we have sown good seed, we need not despair but some will hit, and the return be valuable where it has taken root. Happily we have no hard taskmaster; he will require an account of no more soil than was given us to cultivate. All that remains for me, my brethren, is, to pray for a blessing upon the hearts and minds of those who have attended to my humble exertions for their improvement. The grain I have employed I am certain has been *sound*. The principles of Christian faith and practice, as they are contained in the tenets of our excellent Church, have been most diligently explained, enlarged upon, and enforced. To conclude: Should my future labours experience a *fuller* attendance, than I lament is often the case,

I shall naturally *rejoice*; but the principle I have always mentioned, as the *motive* of my studies, will determine my proceeding in the attempt to serve you. And as possibly, had I had larger congregations, I might have been puffed up with the value of my personal exertions; and, perhaps, have imputed too much to my own powers; so, now, I have the satisfaction of having employed my best endeavours on the pure principle of *duty to my Maker* and for your *welfare*: since, upon the strength of many obvious human and selfish arguments, I might have made some plea for discontinuing a task, that often appeared so little regarded. But *this* is my hope, that he who even *tries* to help one sinner on his way to reformation, and which the instilling sober truth is calculated to effect, hath wrought a good work, and is at the same time preparing for a good reward.—If there are happily any among us, too well instructed, to need the rudiments of religion to be *repeated* in their ears; the majority, it is to be feared, are greatly wanting in the grand work of religious attainment: what the better informed, therefore, do not need immediately themselves, yet, I apprehend, it is nevertheless a duty in them to recommend to those within the influence of their advice; and as example is better than *precept*, it would greatly help the

interest of the cause, if the former also were oftener added to confirm their sentiments as to the purity of their pious *professions*. In short, we should *all* assist in our several callings, and according to our several powers and authority, to forward the work of knowledge and holiness, in the minds and manners of our common brethren; that so we may be found faithful stewards of the superior talents we have received, and show, that neither party nor prejudice interferes to check the progress of general edification. By so doing, we may promise ourselves blessings in all our private undertakings; and by promoting a respect to public worship, and the ordinary means of grace, we may hope to become partakers together of the divine favour, both here and hereafter, and to assure the glorious welcome of, *Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* That these genuine principles of universal charity may direct the practice of all present, God of his infinite mercy grant, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord, *in* whom, and *by* whom, we humbly offer all our imperfect words and works, being conscious that through *Him alone* they can be qualified, or accepted by the Father. To whom, with the Holy Spirit, three Persons and one God, in mystical Trinity united, be all the praise for ever and ever. Amen.

APPENDIX:

COMPRISING

Three Discourses,

ADDRESSED TO THE

PARISHIONERS OF HINXWORTH,

INTRODUCTORY TO THE PRECEDING LECTURES.

SERMON I.

ACTS, VIII. PART OF VERSES 30, 31.

And Philip said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?

As it has pleased God's good providence, from a variety of particular events, to render my situation far more favourable for the discharge of my duty towards you, than it has been formerly, I would, through the divine assistance, show my grateful sense of this blessing, by my future diligent, though humble endeavours to render it instrumental to your benefit and the promotion of God's glory: I would gladly mark this my *actual* * residence among you by some exertion of professional industry, that I might become a faithful steward and servant of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and at the same time discover the purest regard to your eternal interests.

* Very peculiar circumstances of a domestic nature having obliged the Author to commit the care of his parish to a *Curate* for some time.

Upon full consideration of the most likely means to render this intention serviceable to you, I have been able to fix on nothing that can contribute more powerfully to your solid, rational, and effectual improvement, than to endeavour to store you with sound knowledge in the principles of the religion you profess; or, in other words, to make you fully acquainted with the design and doctrines of that excellent form of public instruction, which our Church orders to be taught as the groundwork of our faith and practice, viz. the CHURCH CATECHISM. It shall be my business to discourse to you now on the value of this useful study, as an introduction to a continued course of Lectures upon this subject.

In regard to the propriety of my purposed undertaking, I shall in its due place afford you abundant testimony thereof, from the opinion of several of the highest characters of our church. And as to the necessity of a clear understanding in all religious matters, especially the first principles of Christian knowledge, *that* is not only very fully signified in the words of the text, but the answer which follows confirms the use of this kind of information, which peculiarly belongs to the office of a pastor, and whence it is chiefly expected, or likely, to be performed in any useful degree. *And he said, How can I understand, unless some man should guide*

me? It is this guidance I shall humbly attempt in an easy and full explanation of the Catechism, by satisfying your utmost inquiries concerning what is absolutely necessary for you to know and do, to obtain eternal life: and in this work I engage, from a conviction of the great use, and of the necessity, both to you and myself, of attending to the Apostle's admonition of *doing good while we have time.*

But before I enter upon what more immediately concerns my plan, it will be no way foreign to the main subject of this Discourse, to take notice of a very remarkable particular contained in this passage of Scripture concerning the persons appointed to the work of the ministry. Two things are very worthy notice in the case of the great man in the text.

First—that though, from a holy disposition, he was inclined to search the fountain of all truth for knowledge to direct him, he had been hitherto left to the light of his own understanding to discover the way therein; and that though, from situation, he was deprived of a fuller interpretation of the prophetic word, yet was he favoured with no extraordinary help, but reserved for the benefit of the more ordinary means of receiving the knowledge of God's gracious designs towards him and all mankind in Jesus Christ.

Secondly, the circumstance of his instruc-

tion strengthens the positive institution of ORDINATION, and greatly confirms the authority of a *regular ministry:* for, the person appointed to instruct him in the mysteries of his faith, and to satisfy his further religious inquiries, was one of the *first* of that order that received apostolical license, ordination, or appointment, after our blessed Lord had ascended up on high, and given all power and authority to his immediate successors for the propagation of the Gospel, in an orderly and regular manner. He was of that rank which is retained in the church to this day, founded on the original institution of Christ and his Apostles; he was a deacon, duly called, and sent forth, who is here so eminently employed in the grand work of converting this nobleman to Christianity. The divine Spirit openly interferes to confer this honour upon his qualified servant Philip; as if he was intended to stamp a perpetual sanction on the order he belonged to, and hand down a becoming respect to the positive institution of the sacred office, by this extraordinary dispensation in the exercise of it.

But to the more immediate purport of my Discourse. It requires no enlarged capacity, and but a small share of religious inclination, to be convinced at first sight that a mere *repetition* of principles and precepts, however frequently and perfectly rehearsed, will avail little to the

advancement of godly knowledge, if the meaning and end of what is then got by rote is not thoroughly understood; nay, even that slight degree of children's learning, if only attended to during one short portion of the year, would most likely be quite forgotten before the return of the season. This, in truth, is now happily remedied in many places by the pious and provident institution of Sunday schools, and for which reason I revived the primitive custom of our church of a weekly attention to this useful study; and doubtless from God's blessing, which we may securely promise upon every upright endeavour, the effect will prove valuable in due time, provided you are diligent to assist my good wishes towards your children, by enforcing your parental or relative authority over them.

Many are most weakly apt to affirm, that their children are afraid to attend this public mode of learning their duty to God and their fellow-creatures, from an apprehension of too close an investigation of their attainments. We well know that most children are naturally backward in complying with the business of instruction in any shape; but were we to yield to their thoughtless inclinations, universal ignorance must follow. Some children may discover a constitutional modesty and diffidence for public examination. Where this is really of native growth, it is no unfavourable symptom, and by reasoning and encouragement may be

directed to the best of purposes. But, in general, boldness prevails more than bashfulness in neglected youth, and points out to those who have the weighty charge, the necessity of showing them the proper distinction; it is a care incumbent upon every parent and relation to teach them never to be ashamed or afraid of doing what is right, and of learning to be wise and good. Several of the poorer among you, I rather fear, do not sufficiently warn their offspring to be afraid of doing wrong: however, by this humble attempt, they will have an opportunity of knowing thoroughly what is both right and wrong; and then the bad consequence will fall, as is most just, on themselves only, if they do not strive to profit by it. This satisfaction I can take to my part in the exertion, that, lest precept should be deprived of its most effectual support, I have, and shall invariably hold out to you the example of my own charge. But a still further inducement to pursue my present design, is derived from these additional considerations.

I am persuaded it is in a great measure from remissness, in the early care of instilling religious truths into the minds of children, that, first, when they grow up, they reap so little benefit from what they hear from this place; and, secondly, that in consequence thereof they are more easily led astray, and estranged from that pure church in which they were bred, and

are *tossed to and fro, and carried away by every wind of doctrine, and the slight of men.* The Wise Man's advice, of *training up a child in the way he should go,* is very applicable to this point, as well as the corresponding admonition of *teaching him to remember his Creator* in the days of his youth. He will then be gratefully sensible of the blessing of an established worship, and when he is old, will neither be apt to depart from God's laws or forsake his house.

I will beg your patience while I dwell a little upon both these articles.

First, I would from my heart, that ye should glory in this, that *ye understand me.* And the sure way to effect it, is to provide early and sound instruction, by which means the advantages will be so truly felt, as to better the lives of the rising generation, and even reach down to the practice of future times; and possibly some share of the ignorance and error that is already contracted may be removed and corrected at the same time.

But do not suppose that I mean here to make any uncharitable observations upon the conduct of *others,* or to interfere but where my own immediate responsibility is at stake: *we must study to be quiet, and do our own work.* The constant notice of a growing evil calls for due regard to some sure remedy; and though

instant reformation may not appear, and cannot be expected, the sooner an attempt is made to check the progress of a disorder, the more hope is there of its being removed or lessened. The kingdom of God is represented as a grain of mustard-seed; from small beginnings it proceeds to flourishing vigour; but if it is never cultivated, the weeds of the soil will soon prevail and smother it.

Every man's own conscience must be his rule upon extraordinary occasions. To some perhaps, and in particular situations, such an exertion may seem inexpedient or fruitless, which to another may diminish in difficulty from the apparent necessity of the task. *We are all labourers together in the same vineyard,* though some have an easier portion of work than others. I would willingly lay a good foundation—Jesus Christ—the chief corner-stone, and enable you to *build upon* it. Now, as no *other* foundation can be laid that will endure the severity of every storm, whatever a man raises upon it, *every man's work shall be made manifest: if it abide, he shall receive a reward; if it be burnt, he shall suffer loss, yet he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire:* that is, if a man persists in the labours of his office, and through the perverseness of human nature, and various causes, no immediate return appears, yet his honest zeal

shall be repaid; and if his work be lost, as his toil, of course, must be rendered more arduous from the melancholy observation of his fruitless endeavours, he may be said to be *saved as by fire*, i. e. by a *hard trial*—by a difficult and *discouraging warfare*. Further: though it is most true that whosoever planteth or watereth, it is God only can give the increase, as well to spiritual diligence as to temporal labour; yet we must both plant and water, or we can have no reasonable prospect of reaping fruit, neither in one case nor the other.

For, notwithstanding it is assuming an undue privilege to judge another man's servant, *since to his own master he standeth or falleth*; yet it is our wisdom and duty to look to our own business, as we may happen to be particularly circumstanced in various respects; because *every man shall reap his own reward, according to his labour*. After all, *there is no room for boasting*, for we have none of us any thing but what we have received.

Lest any one, therefore, should apprehend that I am dealing in new matters, or presuming to exalt my own works, by any vain indulgence of favourite fancies or partial opinions, I would refer you to the Prophet's direction upon this article of early instruction, and then defend my practice by the public authority of our own prelates of ancient and modern times, both in their

writings and their conduct. *Whom*, saith Isaiah, *shall he teach knowledge, and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts; for precept must be upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little.* In few words, it is impossible too early to commence religious instruction, or to convey it in too simple terms.

The few particular incitements to this duty, as recommended by our ecclesiastical superiors, and which only, out of a great variety, I shall deliver to you at present, shall be, first, the opinion of a pious Bishop of former times, who in treating the subject of the lamented remissness of parents and guardians in sending their children and dependents to receive public instruction in *his* day, has these words: "For this neglect will not be so general (says he), when people find you do not only examine those that are sent, whether they can merely *say* their Catechism, but set yourselves in good earnest to instruct them thoroughly in all the fundamental articles of the Christian faith, and in all the duties that they owe to Almighty God, to their sovereign, to their parents, and to all their relations, as well as to one another; for all sensible and well-disposed people will then see that this is the best sort of education that parents can give to their children, and that which will do

them more good than any thing else that they can do for them.

Now, my good friends, how do you find your own zeal in this important business to agree with the practice of such wise parents as are here described? Do you exert yourselves to bring your children regularly to this place, for the important purpose of learning what it is to be a Christian?—Do you not often rather incline to a most hurtful indulgence, in yielding to their excuses, instead of employing what leisure you have to prepare them for such an appearance as might render it a delight, as well as profit to them to attend? And if you are not qualified to lend them these helps at home, do you avail yourselves of your natural authority over them, to compel them to attend where they may have that advantage supplied?—Where this fault cannot be denied, I will resolve the reason of so gross a breach of duty: it is because you are not thoroughly sensible *yourselves* of the *excellence* and *necessity* of the exercise: it is because you have not had the blessing of the *like* opportunity in your younger years; or you would, from habit and conviction, and for your own and their best interests' sake, be most strenuous and uniformly diligent to *see* them attend; I say *see* them, for few present, even of those who have arrived at years of maturity (that are of an ingenuous and humble frame

of mind), but must own, if they were closely pressed, that they are *themselves* deficient in that essential foundation of religious knowledge which is needful to the support of a solid edifice; and for want of which they totter and waver, and are at their wit's end to digest and reconcile very many points, which occasionally present themselves to their mind upon serious subjects; which would appear clear to them if they had received a good ground of instruction in proper time.

Such persons, for manifest reasons, cannot be called upon, or perhaps at all persuaded to a public examination; and, therefore, by serious attention to the plain, progressive, and essential principles here implanted in those they hold most dear, they might even still collect much valuable information for themselves; such as would satisfy them in many important articles, prove the benefit of the undertaking, and convince them of the heavy guilt that will lie at their own door, if they are slack in giving it encouragement by their presence and their power. In short, I fear the sad experience of indifference in too many respecting this article, does not promise that support to the pious Bishop's observation, which it merits, and ought to receive.

There is another class also who would reap considerable good from constant attendance at

church, and a serious observation of the mode I have adopted for the improvement of the youth of the parish; I mean those young persons who have lately been confirmed, and who may falsely imagine, because by that holy ceremony their public examination is not positively required, that they are sufficiently qualified, without any further schooling on these subjects: but of this mistake they must be self-convicted by the comparison of what they still retain of former learning, with what they every Sunday hear repeated and explained to their relations and acquaintance; many of whom are but a little younger than themselves: and though by their confirmation they have now publicly and solemnly taken their baptismal vow upon *themselves*, it must be allowed highly blameable to grow negligent in preserving the nature of it in their minds, or at their early time of life to suppose that there is no need to inquire any further what it implies, and obliges them to practise. Unless they pursue a wiser measure, they will soon find all they have hitherto learned will be entirely forgotten; and, though they are so near the age of men and women, they will be very children in Christian knowledge.

The method I have adopted, every one must allow, is easy, and universally profitable: as the task returns every Sunday, it must necessarily employ some of the attention of the preceding

week; the use of which, in fixing Scripture truths upon the tender memory, is of considerable importance. It promotes in youth a degree of praiseworthy endeavour to excel; a trial of skill which is guarded from any mixture of evil, by the very nature of the study itself; and a useful share of shame at being outdone in diligence. The number of each sex examined are not so many as to render it tedious to the congregation, or merely matter of slight form to the scholars themselves; and the gradual advancement in the sense of the exposition taught them, according to their ages and capacities, fixes the meaning in their minds, almost past a possibility of being worn out; since the length of time they are under this discipline must render it so very familiar to them: and as the mind unfolds, and gains more strength, the spirit of the words will naturally affect the conscience. The constant repetition of the same precepts in different words, and supported by so many texts of Scripture, must be some check to the natural inclination to vice, and prepare the heart for the admission and improvement of every virtue: and that not merely as it were upon mechanical principles; for the means of procuring any useful increase to our best studies, is as positive a part of this instruction as any other. Hereby likewise the person of slower capacity

has time and opportunity to obtain equal benefit with those endowed with readier powers: and they, on the contrary, who; through an uncommon quicknees, are not always so apt to *keep* what they have learned, are in no danger of letting slip what it is for their greatest advantage never to forget.

Lastly: the too great number amongst us, who can neither read, nor have ever been taught the leading lessons of their duty to their Maker, will have a regular, plain, and happy means of helping their understanding, and need only to bring a well-disposed heart, and apply to God for help, in order to remedy the defects of their former ignorance.

It is truly grievous to think, how many there are, though far advanced in life, who, if asked for an answer to the plainest question in the Catechism, are quite at a loss to render any rational reply: they have hardly sufficient knowledge in these things to distinguish themselves from heathens—can give no satisfactory account *why* they were created, or why *continued* in being.

If you ask who *made* them, they discover ignorance of the very God "in whom they live, "and move, and have their being:" if the nature and office of a *Redeemer* is proposed to their understanding, they scarce know more than that "Jesus was reputed to be a carpenter's son:" and, as to the promise of that blessed Spirit,

held out to all who have enlisted under the conditions of the Christian covenant, it may with too much truth be said, "they never knew that there was a Holy Ghost."

These are sad wants in a Christian community; but all this, in good time, with God's blessing, may be made up to them who feel a desire to know their duty, through the means here laid down for that purpose.

And, as to the children, they who are qualified to instruct their *own*, will not only enjoy the greater pleasure, in seeing them improve, but the very task will be extremely serviceable, in refreshing their own memories with principles which cannot be too deeply rooted.

Such as unfortunately are deprived of their parents, or who, still *more* unfortunately, have such as cannot, or *will* not, help them forward in godly courses, through the benefit of our Sunday School will escape any serious ill effect from the above misfortune; and no excuse can now be made for ignorance:—wilful obstinacy and hardened wickedness alone, will refuse or neglect so desirable a method of learning, where every thing is provided, free of all cost and trouble. But here, perhaps, parental authority will be necessary to compel attendance. This is a duty of most serious consequence upon you all, and a weight of woful punishment will overtake you, if it is neglected. Now, the different

means I have so fully laid before you, are all intended to perfect the good design of recovering and improving in some, and establishing in others, the principles of sound knowledge. I could easily support the truth of the arguments I have employed, by the express opinions of very many learned, pious, and celebrated governors of our church; but I am persuaded that you must be satisfied with what I have advanced, and take my word for the certainty of that high authority. The dictates of your own understanding must agree to the necessity and use of this exertion among yourselves: however, as the public testimony of that highly respected character, the late Archbishop Secker, comes close to the point before us, respecting the good effects of storing the infant mind with religious knowledge, and further vindicates the measures I am pursuing, I shall close this first part of my Discourse in the words of that amiable and pious Prelate.

As a recommendation of the very method I take with the children of our own parish, this excellent man observes as follows:

"Another defect in some places is, that barely the words of the Catechism are taught, without any explanation; now, the very plainest expression in it will require to be changed into others signifying the same thing, but more fully discovering its meaning, else children will too

often learn nothing but the sound; and, unless this danger, which is a very great one, be guarded against, you will have spent both their pains and your own to little purpose. Besides, all sciences have their terms, which must be explained to beginners; and some of these in the Catechism are figurative ones, very prudently used, as they take much meaning into a little compass, and lead to the understanding of the same figures in Scripture, undoubtedly used on purpose to be explained, and without which they are liable to make no impression, or a wrong one. And further still, what is so short, to be easily learnt by heart, must have need, were it ever so clear, to be enlarged upon—the proofs of its truths, the connexion and end of its doctrines, the use and extent of its precepts to be shown; and, therefore, since the canon, with great reason, requires, not only that you examine, but instruct the children in the Catechism, I hope you will think this a very necessary part of your instruction. As to the manner of it, it may be different, not only in different places, but in the same place at different times. Sometimes a short exposition of the more difficult expressions may deserve the preference. Again, asking them questions relating to each part, and causing them to learn texts of Scripture proving each answer, will be always of great benefit. Further, the words of the Catechism itself may

be broken into questions and answers, to which others may be added out of the many good expositions that have been made public." The Archbishop then proceeds to the excuses frequently made for not attending diligently to this work, that "in some places it is pleaded the children cannot read, and their parents cannot or will not have them taught." But here I shall close his valuable directions for the present, by observing, that the *last* inconvenience is in a great degree happily removed in *this* place, through God's great goodness, in providing a most benevolent friend to the *female* children of the parish, who acts upon such pious principles in this good work, as to assure it a continuance and fair hope of blessing upon it, to those disposed to profit by it; and, from the further appointment I have in view, by the Christian assistance of several worthy characters, I have pleasing hope that the *boys* of our poorer brethren will also shortly experience a fuller opportunity of improving in useful knowledge, than has been hitherto afforded them. In respect to the before-mentioned lady, her unwearied zeal for the temporal and spiritual interest of these needy and neglected children, in clothing them, and providing them with schooling, exhibits the soundness of her faith by active virtue, and binds many who now hear me,

to continual returns of the humblest service towards such a friend. Would to God that they were properly sensible of the Lord's kindness to them in this particular; then would some of them be more grateful to their generous benefactress. I am sorry, to their shame, to observe that it is far otherwise. As to those who have grace to be sensible of the value of such an instrument for their comfort, I hope and doubt not but their humble and earnest prayers are constantly employed for her preservation.

There is but one way to reduce the desperately wicked to order; and ingratitude is the basest of all wickedness. When every humane and religious method fails, the infliction of the penalties of those wholesome laws which, God be praised, we have yet in store, must be enforced. Remember, therefore, that the "magistrate doth not bear the sword in vain;" and be assured, I will not fail to apply to that power on every occasion that deserves it, when milder methods will not do, and daring wickedness calls for public punishment; at the same time, you may also depend upon the kindest and most conscientious regard to every thing in my power for the ease and comfort of those whose conduct merits indulgent notice.

I will now deliver to you the sentiments of the other Prelate I likewise mentioned, who

was brought up at the feet of this Christian Gamaliel; and, in imitation of so excellent a master, has lately published the following admonition to us* under his ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

"As to the lowest and most laborious classes of people, they have seldom either leisure or ability to educate their children well; and, unless the public and the clergy take the care upon themselves, the probability is, that they will have no education at all. The usual mode of instructing them in religion, when they are brought in the way of it, is by means of the Church Catechism: this, at first, can be nothing more than teaching the children to repeat it by heart; but, as they grow up, and their understandings open, it should be explained to them in the easiest and most familiar terms—should be placed before them in various points of view, and brought down to the level of their humble capacities, so as to make them comprehend, clearly and distinctly, the grounds and rudiments, the essential doctrines and fundamental duties of that religion which is to be the guide of their conduct here, and the means of their salvation hereafter. This, it must be con-

* The author at that time served a cure in His Lordship's diocese.

fessed, is a laborious part of duty, but it is a part so useful, so important, and so indispensably necessary, that I cannot forbear pressing it home on your most serious attention."

I quote this passage to convince you, both how closely our method agrees with the rules here laid down, and also that, notwithstanding the dissipation of the times, and the reproachful scoffings and unjust censures of many, the pure and positive means of upholding Christianity, and destroying the kingdom of Satan, still exercise the vigilance and zeal of those whom God hath set over us, to admonish and exhort unto good works.

As this directly recommends the task I have lately adopted for your religious improvement, and leads immediately to the second part of the subject, I will now dismiss you, praying God's blessing on what has been said at this time, that you may profitably digest it, and be seriously prepared for the remainder when we meet again. —Now, &c.

SERMON II.

ACTS, VIII. PART OF VERSES 30, 31.

And Philip said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?

I WOULD not pass so unfavourable a judgment upon your religious disposition, my friends, as to suppose it necessary to repeat the heads of my former Discourse, so lately delivered to you upon these words, in order to renew any impression of the great consequence of the subject. I have already shown you, from the nature of things, from fact, from Scripture, and the testimony of the best and wisest men, both of former and more modern times, the value of early instruction in religious knowledge: I shall therefore proceed immediately to the second division of my subject, and endeavour to make it equally clear, that it is, in a great degree, through neglect of this essential article of education, that, when youth grow up, they are so easily led astray, and estranged from the service of that church in which they were born and bred.

First, then, as a falling off from regular attendance upon public worship in the church is become too common in many places, and by those who have, in other respects, the report of being sober and seriously inclined persons; and as I am concerned to observe it is the case with *some* among ourselves, it naturally produces an inquiry into the *cause*, and equally inclines us to use our best endeavours to remove it.

It being past all doubt that the doctrines of our excellent Church are purely evangelical; its service easy to be understood, and at the same time most decent, solemn, and affecting; it must surely contain abundant food for the exercise of every devout soul; and, from the judicious regularity in which it repeats the whole of the sacred volume, its prayers and collects, and the due application of every Christian rite, no orderly and well-disposed person, but may find matter of exhortation and comfort, reproof and admonition, if he will but give earnest, uniform, and sincere attention to the holy form of worship it administers.

That any one should appear dissatisfied with such unexceptionable provision for the soul's health, affords matter of just surprise; and, as the only way to account for a disorder, is to trace it to the fountain-head, I think we may affirm *one* reason at least for the rise and growth of this very blameable conduct to be the want

of that early instruction I so fully treated of in my former Discourse;—to the deficiency of such a solid foundation of sound principles as would answer every scruple of conscience, reconcile all misgiving fears, uphold the weak, satisfy the doubting, and put to flight a host of fanciful and false alarms, which either the artifice of the devil, or the infirmity that flesh is heir to, may occasionally raise in wavering or melancholy minds. I am ready to think, I say, that this great error of separating from the established worship, will be very much prevented by the humble means already mentioned; but, as this will chiefly afford armour to those who are coming up, those that have already started aside, we must endeavour to win back by such methods as their harder case more particularly requires: gentle counsel, seasonable argument, and charitable remonstrance, may possibly work upon *some*, though I am convinced the malady is often inveterate and stubborn; and, as it is doubtless more difficult to reclaim one that is prejudiced in a wrong cause, than to keep him in the right at first; we must, therefore, not slacken in the exercise of every likely means, but exert our best abilities in convincing them of the error and danger of their proceedings, and in vindicating the honour and sufficiency of that church, of which we are appointed the ministers. We must, as St. Paul did, become every thing to every

man, in a qualified sense of humility of deportment and charitable advice, that we may regain some: we must, above all things, put up our petitions to Him who alone can give the increase, "that he would make us pastors according to his own heart."

Habit has such a powerful effect in every thing, that it may well be termed a *second nature*. Such as have been persuaded that they cannot receive due information on the Lord's Day, to supply the exercise of their minds for the rest of the week, must be supposed possessed of more than ordinary zeal for the things of God's law; and as such probably have been used to indulge this disposition at a distance from their home (however needless such practice), nor are able to give just reasons for the many objections to such conduct (and which I shall speak to presently), it is to be feared, either hypocrisy, perverseneess, conceited prejudice, a love of change, or some bad leaven, is at the bottom, if they persist in such unwarrantable desertion, and do not return to the sound and regular forms prescribed for their improvement.

If they *profess* to be of the Established Church, they should yield respectful deference to its authority, and not "take to themselves teachers of the lowest of the people." They have here the sanction of God's house, where alone his worship ought to be celebrated by

those who have enlisted themselves as members of the same.

In the plan I mean to adopt, with the view of weaning some, and preventing others, from following these exceptionable courses, I have fixed upon a *day* sanctified by the express order of the Church for public service. The additional mode of instruction intended to be employed, to keep such persons within the bounds of regularity, and yet supply their most pious inclinations with salutary food, has been approved by the advice and practice of many of our most exemplary rulers: and it is more particularly designed for the purpose of removing all manner of plea for frequenting promiscuous meetings in unlicensed places, and, if possible, to put a stop to so vain and unjustifiable a custom, which reflects indecently upon the industry or ability of the regular minister, and is highly reprovable upon every principle on which it can be examined. The humble instrument, through whom these helps to the more serious and the ignorant are held out, though he cannot, consistently with a becoming spirit of humility, enlarge upon any peculiar excellence of his own method of consulting their good, may yet safely attest the sincerity of the *desire* towards it, which is inferior in purity to that of none who may beguile you with the like assurance, and to whose care you in no respect belong; and, without the least impro-

priety, I may add, you will have a satisfaction, which no self-created teacher can assume, *that every thing is done decently and in order*—that you are serving God in a regular way, under one who has received due authority to instruct you, and therefore you may more reasonably expect a blessing upon your sincere pursuits after further knowledge of God's will. Lastly, the *hour* fixed for the above good purpose, interferes neither with the labour of your respective callings, which is a duty God equally requires you to be truly diligent in following, nor with the very necessary care of your families during that portion of time you have to spare from the close of work to the hour of rest, which must be lost to *them*, if you are roaming about the country at late hours (however good the intention), and which cannot be avoided by those who are carried away by the attraction of various preachers. Whosoever advises you, from a false judgment of the true way of pursuing the *one thing needful*, that the *good will* makes up for every other deficiency, advises you against reason and Scripture, which is founded on reason, because Scripture cannot contradict itself, and because nothing is essentially good which tends to defeat a greater good: and it will certainly prove more profitable to you, *on all accounts*, to provide diligently for the welfare of your children at home (since you are told in God's word, that

he who taketh not care of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel), than any thing you can hear from those whose conduct leads to disorder and confusion, and who are no ways justified to set up for guides, but are as the *blind leading the blind* into error and mischief.

You will please to observe at the same time, that I am addressing only those of our own community who may need such exhortation: I have nothing to do with them *that are without:* I only wish they would keep to themselves, and not interfere with a business that belongs to others. I would merely endeavour to remedy errors that have been introduced among ourselves; and to this end, when I turned in my mind the probable means of favouring the zeal of some to good purpose, nothing seemed more promising to remove any actual complaint of wanting information in holy things, than to commence a weekly Lecture, in a familiar and instructive manner, upon the first principles of our Christian faith and practice, as contained in the Catechism of our Church: thus, by complying with the wishes of those who appear more piously disposed than others, an opportunity would be given of removing prejudices that may have taken place in uninformed, and otherwise well-meaning minds; at least, all just pretence of going *abroad* in search of spi-

ritual instruction, or inviting other ministers to violate their regular engagements, would be silenced. And this leads me to consider the many objections to such a practice: I shall state them separately, and argue upon them fairly.

First, then, let us attend to the value of a regular ministry, and establish its institution and good effects from Scripture. *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing through the word of God,* saith the Apostle; and if we change the order of the words a little, it will still follow in a good sense, and *how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they are sent?* Now, the want of this help, I humbly trust, cannot with any truth be asserted to be *your* case; and it will, by God's blessing, become still less so. A *preacher* you have upon the spot, whom it is your duty to hear, and he is *sent* with every sanction of order, and decent authority, as derived from divine and apostolical institution. But if, after all, you will keep away from God's house, the sin will be your own. All Scripture must be interpreted consistently and connectedly; and as we are thereby taught that we must not do evil that good may come of it, so every practice that may help to sow dissension in the general body, and establish a bad example to the weak, is not praiseworthy, but *wrong. We are not*

to use our liberty that a weak brother may offend; much less is it justifiable to depart from the observing of such rules as are necessary *to keep us together in unity of spirit and the bond of peace.*

The *means* of a due qualification for any office are not the less valuable, though they may be neglected or abused by the possessors; but he who has them, and employs them in the work they are calculated to promote, is certainly better qualified for a respectable and useful discharge of his office, than those who neither have, nor ever can attain to them, and therefore are too apt to lower their value by bolder pretensions to still superior gifts. But upon whom can this pass? Only upon those, as ignorant as such people themselves, and who are slaves to credulous weakness; and because they do not possess the needful advantages of education, they misapply Scripture to depreciate these gifts and blessings of God; for instance, when they would avail themselves of such texts as this —*Not many learned are called:* which is by no means spoken to lessen the excellence of the human faculties, or the necessity of the *means* to cultivate them, but only to guard against the *perversion* of the talent, and prevent its being directed to a different purpose than it is calculated to effect; which is to explain the

word, and exalt and spread the glory of God, the giver of every good gift.

At all times the people are ready to call for a *sign* from every professor of public ministry. The sign of John the Baptist was the history of his birth and alliance, and that *he did many wonders*, and was expressly deputed as a messenger *to prepare the way of the Lord.* Our blessed Saviour also appealed to his miracles, and desired *to be believed for his works' sake.* The power and authority of the Apostles were likewise established by the *same means;* they had the *extraordinary* gift of the Holy Spirit poured upon them, and with *them* the test of *miracles ceased.* But even in our Saviour's time there were such things as *lying wonders;* and, to guard us against the impostures of unqualified men, when his disciples applied to him for advice concerning such as seemed to them to need rebuke, his answer showed, that respecting such as could not produce the signs of regular appointment, or that positive ordination which his immediate followers possessed, of *them* it was required to *work a miracle in his name.* And they who still have not this due qualification, which has descended in successive order from Christ and his Apostles, do often pretend to preternatural gifts; but with what show of truth or reason we need only judge from the assurance just now delivered,

that with the Apostles all miracles were at an end.

If any should weakly build upon the ambiguous meaning of *words*, and assert, in vindication of unwarrantable liberty to assume the sacred function, that St. Paul asserts, *that so Christ was preached;* it was matter of rejoicing to him, even *though it was of strife;* we need only refer them to Phil. ii. 3, to clear him of any improper or dangerous meaning: *Let nothing be done*, says he, *through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.* The Apostle cannot be supposed to write so inconsistently, as to commend and disclaim strife almost in the same breath, or that, when he employs that word, in the 1st chapter of this Epistle, he means thereby to afford sanction to an *uncommissioned* exercise of preaching; but in the above speech he only alludes to a set of Jewish converts, who had turned themselves to preaching, chiefly from opposition to *him*, not being willing to allow that he was more particularly *set for the defence of the Gospel* than they; and thus depreciating, as many now do, the value of a positive commission, which these converts wanted: but, in a commendable warmth for the extending of his Master's name on earth, when he rejoices that it spread at any rate, we cannot imagine him to mean it in the spirit of

encouraging *irregular proceedings*, without a manifest contradiction of his own *repeated principles*; for, the *beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water*. But, after all, the Apostle was not devoid of human frailty; he held *the gift in an earthly vessel*, as the best do, and the vehemence of his zeal might sometimes transport him to unguarded utterance. Even in his truly pious wish to become more serviceable to the cause of Christ, the removal of the supposed impediment was judged improper by HIM, *whose grace was sufficient* under any infirmity; and the *thorn* was suffered to *continue, to humble him, lest he should be exalted above measure.*

The conduct of our blessed Master himself, the perfect pattern of our best endeavours, is highly worthy both our admiration and imitation. At the same time that he discovers a spirit of toleration, most needful to be cultivated by all his true disciples, it is restrained within the bounds of *caution* and *due authority*. Though he does not command his Apostles *to forbid* them, he gives no encouragement to *follow* them as *teachers*: though he asserts, that such as are not *against* him are on his side, he requires some vouchers to supply the place of regular commission, as before observed. And even should this be injudiciously wrested as *some* authority for *itinerant*

preaching, it could only apply to that *particular* time when *miracles* were performed by those who so fully believed in Christ, on report of all his mighty works, as by virtue of their extraordinary faith in him to obtain so high a power: and it is further to be observed, that the different orders of the ministry were not then specifically settled. Since the time of Christ and his Apostles, the extraordinary influence of the Holy Ghost is not to be expected; the faithful and diligent use of the *ordinary* means of grace will abundantly qualify for such a discharge of duty, in this state of trial, as to prepare us for the reward promised to those who *walk in the commandments of the Lord blameless.*

As, therefore, preternatural proofs of qualification for the office of the ministry cannot be pretended to without the highest presumption, bordering upon enthusiasm and profaneness, and, in truth, are wholly needless; so we must look for some other sufficient license to undertake it; and this can only be in apostolical institution, as is abundantly proved throughout the writings of the Apostles, and which took its rise in virtue of their Lord's own example in openly delegating them to act: for, as St. Paul saith, *God hath set some in the church, first Apostles:* and in the earliest days, after Christ was taken from them, they proceeded to appoint the different orders of the ministry.

One full text in point, in the words of the same inspired Apostle, to that order of men *who* were to *continue* the *outward* qualification in regular succession, is as effectual as a *thousand: The things which thou hast heard of me, commit them to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others.* And again: *Ordain elders in every city, as I have appointed thee.* This is enough to satisfy any reasonable person, that no other pretensions are valid, but such as have an outward commission. Other proofs to the same effect are equally numerous, as clear and powerful; a few will serve our present purpose: though at a time when so many unlettered preachers have gone forth, when even *women* of the lowest class assume the public office of the ministry, the Scripture cannot be too much employed to *prevent* the unwary from being deluded, and to strengthen the wavering from following these self-sufficient guides.

In the Second Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy, chap. ii. ver. 5, he asserts, that, *if any man strive for the mastery, he is not crowned unless he strive* LAWFULLY. In chap. iv. ver. 3, he prophesies, *that a time will come, when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts* (i. e. fond and vain desires) *shall* HEAP TO THEMSELVES *teachers, having itching ears.* And in his Epistle to Titus, chap. i. he

admonishes him to hold fast the faithful word he had been taught, because there were many UNRULY *and vain talkers and deceivers, whose mouth should be stopped:* and he advises him *to rebuke such sharply.* If you wish to know the *form of sound doctrine, which cannot be withstood, irreproachable,* consult the whole of chap. ii. of this Epistle. And what is further recommended to the same disciple, who was one of the first fathers of the Church, is, *that he should affirm constantly, that they who believe in God should be careful to maintain good works.* And in regard to *women,* he *commandeth that they should learn in silence with all subjection;* and again (probably from some vain attempts of the kind, even in those days) he adds, *But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority, but to learn silence.* And to another of his churches he orders, *that the women should keep silence, for it is not permitted them to speak; for it is a shame for a woman to speak in a church, or congregation.* And, to conclude his sentiments of the different conduct he recommends to this part of his converts, he closes the advice with—*Let all things be done decently, and in order.*

St. James assures us, upon this point of division, *that where envying and strife is, there is confusion;* which leads me to show you further, the danger of attending to such as

are not lawfully ordained to the work of the ministry: and St. Paul adds his confirmation of the same, *that God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, in all the churches of the saints.* Without availing myself, therefore, of the advantage derived from the authority of the earliest custom, and the variety of facts which ingenious study might furnish, to strengthen this side of the question, I rather build the whole defence of the argument upon the positive testimony of *Scripture only*, because that is open to you all, and level to your understandings, as far as it is applied; and as that clearly directs you to what order of teachers it is safest to attend, and abundantly discourages all false pretensions to usurp an office of so serious a cast, through the vain dependence upon *private* calls; as likewise all self-created ministers, whose authority has neither miraculous test, nor the regular succession of holy ordinance to support it; I shall proceed to point out the manifest danger to yourselves of yielding to the vain fancies of such persons, and that from the general mode and tendency of their conduct.

As the free gifts of nature, independent of cultivation, are equally bestowed on the generality of mankind, so their natural views and pretensions, unless restrained by *positive* laws and institutions, which form the basis of social

order and happiness, equally impel them to aim at preference and power. Now, the levelling that submission which is due to any kind of establishment that can plead the authority of divine ordinance, and which has been subscribed to by general consent, must inevitably open a floodgate to licentious liberty and confusion, and reduce the community to the wild and barbarous state of ungovernable equality; and the meanest labourer, in the fervour of deluded fancy, may conceive himself equally capable and qualified to teach, as any other who has no better testimony to show than his own persuasions: for, as to *education*, when that can be supplied by so powerful a substitute as immediate inspiration, every man, on the principles of original equality, and the insufficiency of order and outward commission, lays claim to similar privilege and benefit. And if some, who have had all the advantages of learning, can yet descend to encourage such an error in this respect, no wonder the ignorant and bold should transgress the bounds of decency and order; for all must be concluded strictly deserving such a description, who impiously invade the sacred office, and deal out their indigested doctrines with presumptuous freedom. *From such, my friends, I warn you to turn aside;* and my reason is, because you will

most likely be told by such persons, what will prejudice you from attending your own holy church, confuse your thoughts, and unsettle your minds.

As for instance, in many of these private conventicles, and by these self-formed teachers, you will hear the whole body of the regular clergy occasionally held forth in a contemptuous light; the weakest and most presumptuous pleas advanced for the preference of their own fraternity, and our mode of preaching objected to, as not being under any influence of the Spirit of God—a favour they arrogate to themselves in a high degree; and one proof they give of this is, because it has not the test of extempore delivery:—the most silly and falsest argument; as if every good man did not ask God's blessing upon his professional labours, and that it was not as necessary to a *written* discourse, as to every religious exertion whatsoever; or as if the value of God's gift of understanding, and his blessing in the mighty benefits derived from good education, did not form an eminent portion of the *divine favour*.

Let us now coolly and candidly determine, which has the *best mark* of the divine concurrence and gracious aid; a discourse partaking of all the essential ingredients to render it *safe, intelligible*, and to God's *honour*, and the important interests of his servants; or a jumble of indi-

gested subjects, needless repetitions, and low comparisons, often interrupted by actual deficiency, both as to utterance and matter, notwithstanding the boasted assistance of the Spirit; and, to speak most charitably, so often intermixed with offensive observation and downright nonsense, that if the whole were committed to writing from the lips of the inspired orator, and shown to him at a little distance of time, he would be justly ashamed of the composition, most probably disown it, nor venture to allow it those signs of that immediate unerring influence, which can never be the author of confusion and absurdities. But even were these discourses *connected, eloquent*, and without any of the objections above mentioned, which may be the case with some, where thought, talent, and study, distinguish the performance; yet, this is no more a proof of the Spirit being more particularly concerned in producing these compositions, than in one from manuscript, the effect of deliberation, judgment, and correction; for men have their various natural talents. The Apostle saith, *No man can call Jesus, Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.* Does it matter whether I make this confession with a book before me, or without one? He saith further, *Now, there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit*; which is proof enough that no preference is due, *merely* for talking by rote, not even though

the matter should be intelligible and edifying. Again, *The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.* Now, which bids fairest to possess the manifestation of a wise and teaching spirit, and to furnish *profit* to the hearers; that which is an object of respect, and will bear examination, or that which is often an object of ridicule, and can stand no sound inquiry? I leave the decision to your own impartial sentence.

The greatest hypocrite may have the natural faculty of a good memory, and the knack of extemporizing, and may be possessed of audacious confidence and strong nerves; while the most holy man alive, and the most religiously informed, could not be prevailed upon to deliver a sermon without his notes, in public, upon any consideration; and though, perhaps, with every other qualification for the task, but constitutional audacity, might possibly fail, were he to attempt it. But if this man's life is upright, if his example is profitable, if his doctrine is founded upon evangelical principles, is he to be degraded as not being yet *taught of God?* None but fools or fanatics will assert it. Thus you see, my friends, how you may be gulled out of the evidence of your own understandings.

But, further, there is a great deal in early *habit*, as well as peculiar gift; and it will not admit of doubt, but that men of genius might

in a *degree* avail themselves of the advantage of prompt delivery in the pulpit, as in other oratory, were it the custom to have it early practised, and that without the additional effect of inspiration; though in *solemn* charges, perhaps, the more circumspect and guarded method is the best.

To vary the subject of uncharitable reflection and invidious censure, and rather than *not* indulge this usual talent in the lower class of teachers, when the *minister* does not afford fair game, they will vilify our *public service*. They often object to some hard words that may be found therein. Now, the same exceptions may be advanced with equal propriety and weight, against many parts of our translation of the Bible itself. The word *schism*, for example, gives great offence, has a host of enemies, and it is very natural it should; for, who is over-fond of a word which conveys immediate reproach and censure (and so very justly) upon his own misconduct in this particular? No schismatic, consequently (i. e. no needless separatist from the church in which he was born and bred), will praise the application of this term, because it bears so hard against *himself*. It is therefore highly politic in all such to conjure up some mischief in this harsh-sounding word, which may work a prejudice in the ignorant multitude.

You have heard this word explained so often, that, did it not immediately concern this portion of my Address, it would be needless to repeat it. It is derived from the Greek language, and signifies literally, a *division* or *separation*, as applied in a fair religious sense: it is branded in Scripture as a very heinous crime, for which good reason our Church prays particularly that her members may be guarded from it; and it is no wonder, therefore, that all who wish to be thought *extraordinarily* good, should object to its being applied to *them*. It does not so essentially concern our Christian brethren, the dissenters of this age, who, like their ancestors, have been educated under a different ecclesiastical form, as it does the *daily separatists* before alluded to. *These* objectors have a most *curious* method of shifting this charge off themselves upon *us*, though they had no existence before, but in that body which they proceed daily to dismember; nay, they would join the *general* foe of Protestants, by involving all alike in the charge of schism, rather than allow themselves offenders in this article. They make no distinction between a disunion on account of the most dangerous errors and unscriptural practices, and division for the most trivial causes; they would have the single opinion of a whimsical individual carry as much authority as the sentiments of a nation, confirmed by the act of the whole legislature,

upon scriptural decision. But I think it proper to repeat, that I would here draw a line between the regular presbyterian and the conceited modern innovator. Liberty of conscience, in following the tenets of our ancestors, may justly be claimed, however desirable it might be that we were *all of one mind:* but wantonly to desert the venerable form of worship so long established by Divine Providence; the peculiar church of our country, in whose bosom our forefathers have lived and died, and wrought out their salvation, and that without any better plea than a rage for novelty; to be zealous in alienating others from their duty in this respect, and in following every low and vain pretender to superior excellence, is so very contradictory to good sense and a safe conscience, that no apology can be admitted for *such* schismatics.

But if words of learned sound and derivation could reasonably be allowed good ground for contention and division, the word *apostle* is just as open to the weak exceptions of a dissatisfied caviller; for it is equally remote from strict relationship to our native tongue. Perhaps the mere English title of *messenger* might be better suited to their purpose: but as we are not justified in crediting a messenger, before he gives full proof of his being commissioned by the master he pretends to serve; so nothing would be gained by change of words, while

their sense remained unalterable. In short, there would be no end of instances, to show the effect of injudicious zeal, to what poor shifts it is reduced, and what trifles it builds upon for its defence.

Another danger from attending these irregular teachers, is the pernicious influence of the *doctrines* that are maintained by many of them. I shall touch but very slightly on this mischief at present, as you are occasionally guarded against it, whenever the tendency of the following tenets can with propriety be introduced in the course of my general instruction from this place. But as *any* proper notice of this part of the subject would take up more of your time than it is reasonable to require, after what I have already said; and as what I have to observe will furnish ample matter for another Discourse; I shall defer the concluding articles of admonition for your instruction when we meet again.

Now, &c.

SERMON III.

ACTS, VIII. PART OF VER. 30, 31.

And Philip said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?

In my two former Discourses upon these words, I contrived such a division of the subject as might contribute to impress your minds with a distinct apprehension of the principles I recommended to your cultivation; the practices I could wish you to avoid, as being not only needless, but unprofitable; the great value of an early and sound foundation; and the safety of adhering to that form of worship in which you have been educated. I concluded my last Discourse at that part which treated of the danger that often proceeds from an injudicious management of deep and mysterious doctrines, by unlearned men before ignorant hearers. The particular tenets I then alluded to, were those of the people called Antinomians, and the favourers of unconditional election and reprobation. By the first are meant, the *enemies of the law*, or

those who cry down the value of good works, pretending such doctrine is too apt to raise the creature in his own esteem, and who exalt the *all-sufficiency of faith*, as being best calculated to humble him; by which a dangerous inference may be drawn by the ignorant and wicked, that, as the purchase is secured, little can be done on our part towards it; thus *rending asunder* what *God has eternally joined together.* Whereas the only end of faith must be good works, and without them it is dead to all intents and purposes. But this will always be a favourite doctrine with the idle and presumptuous, who are encouraged to continue in evil habits, from a false notion in what shape and degree every thing is done for them; from a delusion, that they have a certain remedy at hand that will qualify their remissness, and the virtue of which is sufficient, if they can but persuade themselves they have a part in it, though our blessed Lord himself declares, all such will call upon him in vain, *who do not the works that he hath commanded.* From want of powers to distinguish, religious subjects are confused by illiterate men, and perverted by the equally ignorant congregation; and through the readiness of the heart to err, many are led to commit glaring immoralities, while they profess the purest faith. In short, by lowering the spirit of striving after holiness, i. e. working out our

salvation with fear and trembling, they overset the pillars of the Gospel, *justice, mercy,* and *humility,* and encourage a false and dangerous hope. There can be but one sure mark of our belonging to Christ, and that is, partaking of his Spirit: and the only proof of *this* is, to bring forth the *fruits* of it. *Ye cannot bring forth fruit except ye abide in me,* saith our Lord: the consequence is, if ye do abide in him ye will produce good fruit; and if *ye do not, ye are none of his.* Therefore let them tell you what they will, if ye do not Christ's commands, ye cannot be said to belong to him, and he will deny all such at the last day, whatever appearance they may make of violent zeal at present. Now, God's commandments, or the moral law, and Christ's, *must* be one and the same thing; because we know Christ did not come to *make void the law,* but to fulfil it; and his influence and design is to *prepare to himself a people zealous of good works,* the practice of which will train and qualify them beforehand to enjoy the exercise of further purity and holy love in heaven.

The other doctrine I alluded to, as equally dangerous, if misunderstood, is commonly called, *predestination.* This leads to a fond and curious diving into, and bold decision upon, the hidden councils of the Almighty from everlasting, which being often most indiscreetly

handled, and as ignorantly applied, tends to promote either false security or fatal despondency, and may dishearten many from persevering in the plain paths of uprightness, or occasion an indulgence in sloth: whereas, the only decrees that can concern or will affect the creatures of a wise and merciful Creator, are such as proceed in consequence of a *just condition*, either respecting our reward or punishment; which will prove our fate, according as we have employed the gracious means to obtain the one, or, by neglecting them, have deserved the other: and this implies the nature of a covenant, or solemn treaty, which is the sound and scriptural sense in which I believe the Gospel has always been received by sober reason; for all engagements necessarily suppose condition. In short, we may thus safely conclude from our belief of God's perfections, that from all eternity he hath predestinated or appointed the humble and upright to a state of peace and happiness, and the wicked to destruction. But he declares himself, *that he is no respecter of persons, that he desireth not the death of a sinner, and that* ALL *who work righteousness will be accepted in Christ Jesus.*

Now, as many of these persons who take upon them to go preaching about the country, are under no proper jurisdiction, and consequently out of the reach of remonstrance or re-

proof; and as in the Scripture, especially in St. Paul's Epistles (in which they deal considerably), there are many things *hard to be understood*; they bend, and twist, and level these points according to their own particular opinions and uncultivated understanding: for, having no knowledge of the original language in which they were at first conveyed, and being above the consideration of particular times, circumstances, and occasions, which lead to a just discovery of their design and application, they interpret them severally as the letter strikes upon their feeble judgment, or give a sense of their own where they are incapable of finding that of the Apostle.

These passages are liable to various constructions, according to the genius and ingenuity of the interpreter: and though those preachers may be classed under several distinctions, who profess in *general* a different sentiment from that I am immediately opposing; yet, as the mind of man is free, and few but have a peculiar and partial opinion upon particular points according to early prejudice, which governs the main tendency of his doctrine, I would only appeal to any present, who may have attended different orators of this stamp, what a confusion of notions, what perplexity of thought, you have experienced from their different methods of treating the same thing; if they have not al-

most prevented you from the use of thought at all. To a great number of such we may most aptly apply the Apostle's description of *teachers neither understanding what they say, nor whereof they affirm.*

From these causes the mind becomes *unsettled,* principles are at variance, and, for want of an early and solid foundation (which I maintain would keep men steady to their mother church), they go in search of different information, get an habit and fondness for variety, are daily entangled in fresh difficulties, and become less capable of relishing the plain and substantial truths which those *who run may read,* and which, with prayer to God to bless their humble and hearty endeavours, could not fail to invite his further favour, and prepare them a place in his heavenly kingdom.

To expose *all* the inconveniences and dangers of these innovations in religion would be endless. I will only offer you some few proofs of their unprofitableness in other respects.

God is unchangeable: what he has once commanded, he must ever expect to be complied with. *I am not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil it,* saith our blessed Lord. He was with the Father, and came from him, and knew his will, and did it. Him we may safely trust. The commandment says, *Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do, but the seventh day*

is the sabbath of the Lord thy God. Industry in your several callings, and the due care of your families or children, are duties that compose the greater part of the trial of the labouring man, while he has health and strength: this includes honesty, of course; and the gratitude due to God for ability to discharge the task allotted to the several stations his wisdom hath appointed you, is shown by a regular and humble service to him in his house, where, by the public sanction of the laws, his worship is established, and a power to perform it dispensed to our fellow-subjects, who have been educated purposely for that high office, and not where, by an imposition on the lenity of the legislature, that liberty is usurped.

In acquitting yourselves thus conscientiously, you are serving God acceptably. Such a conduct further implies resignation to God's will, and becoming praise for his mercy, in affording you such a decent mode of serving him; humility, sobriety, and contentment in yourselves, justice towards those who employ you, and good example to your neighbours. And though you may be told, the secret pleasures ever flowing from such indispensable duties and sincere endeavours, savour too much of building up *your own righteousness*, and magnifying *the works of the law*; depend upon it, these are the fruits of a sound faith; no one can perform

them uniformly and permanently, who is not convinced they are necessary for his soul's health; and they who have them not, though they had faith to remove mountains, may at last call upon those mountains in vain to cover them from the vengeance that pursues unrighteousness and presumption, when they find their nakedness *without* them, their want of the true wedding garment, and that these are the materials of which it should have been made. Now, every thing that interferes with the fulfilling of these necessary duties, let the plea be ever so plausible, is faulty, and to be avoided.

Regularity and rest are the springs that afford strength and spirits for work: if these times are broken in upon, by going to a distant place to hear a famous preacher, and continuing there some hours, both mind and body must return fatigued, and the care required at home of course be neglected: it must, in the nature of things, afford an excuse for *some* idleness the next day, the hours of repose and rising being thus changed; an habit of neglecting your daily employments will be insensibly contracted, and the resources of support being lessened, your families must suffer proportionably. But supposing what you go to hear had none of the objections I have specified, and was equally inoffensive in matter, manner, and effect; the faculties of men, especially after hard labour has exhausted

the powers of the body, are no ways equal to so long an attention upon one thing, without yielding to the weakness of nature; in which case the profit can be nothing, and it would be much easier and better to sleep at home; or if otherwise, what is occasionally collected between slumber and attention, will be so imperfect, as to afford no real benefit. Be assured, my friends, whatever you may have been persuaded to hope, your utmost zeal in these unseasonable exercises will never atone for your perverse neglect of the *plain* and *positive* obedience enjoined to the commandment.

But further: *nightly* preachments are open to great objections on other accounts, however defended by some pious motives. 1st, No exception of persons can be made, with any degree of propriety, where the word of God is made the reason of assembling; which often brings together a strange mixture of characters, is sometimes the cause of rude disorder, and the profanation of the most holy things: and if this does not happen on the very spot, all such meetings at night lead to a sort of riot in collecting and when they are dismissed, both very inconsistent with a solemn assembly:—I speak from known fact. Again: as, from the very principle of a view to *conversion*, *none* can be refused, as before observed, many must be admitted, who (without any breach of charity),

it is well known, go with no pious purpose, curiosity, perhaps, the least exceptionable design; and the familiarities and opportunities of temptation, from the society of good, bad, and indifferent, in dark and solitary journeys, often lay the foundation of more vice than virtue. But,

2dly, What is more to the purpose: we find no positive authority, encouragement, or countenance for such superfluous practices throughout all the history of our blessed Master's ministry, which, as it is the true source whence any religious exertion can safely flow, so is it the armour they would use to defend every species of extraordinary zeal. Now, I know but of *one* instance (and that not solicited by himself) of our Lord's renewing the exercise of his heavenly doctrine *by night:* it is in the case of Nicodemus, who, it is to be observed, came of his own accord, and *singly*, and on a matter of *private* inquiry; and yet, as our blessed Saviour urges our diligence, by *warning us of the season when no man can work*, consequently he would have lost no time himself. His stay was but short upon the earth as a *public teacher;* and no one, I apprehend, will account him *slack* in his Father's business during that time; nay, who can be supposed more earnest in the cause of its advancement, than the blessed AUTHOR of the

religion? And as he had the means of supernatural help, as is evident from his long fasting and working of miracles, doubtless he would have used his power in this particular instance of more incessant preaching, had he judged the example necessary, or had he not known that the frame of mortal men was too weak to bear it with any profitable effect. Rest, retirement, private prayer and meditation, are all clearly warranted by our Lord's example; who, after the close of day, declined any further intercourse with the people, whom he must reasonably have concluded to have retired also for the wholesome purposes already mentioned. But now that his church is happily planted, the uninterrupted means, and due *return* of those means, render all such labours needless, and on the sabbath more particularly. Any encouragement of these superfluous novelties must necessarily interfere with the incumbent duties before specified, as so very essentially binding upon you all; they *must* be neglected while you are attending elsewhere. The most religiously disposed person will find abundant opportunities at home of exercising pious inclinations.

Do not uncharitably attribute any thing I have said to idle or lukewarm principles; but receive it as a sober and sincere regard for your best moral and religious obligations. I have

declared to you, according to the light I have, and what I honestly think right and safe in my own present conduct, I have held up to you the pattern of the DIVINE JESUS; I cannot propose to you a better guide.

If you have that zeal for pleasing God, which many pretend, and are truly desirous of doing good in your generation, I would advise you to let these valuable principles show themselves in a different way. Whatever time you have to spare between the hours of leaving work and repose, you will always find something to keep you from being idle, for their good who depend entirely upon your diligence. In a religious exercise, nothing can be a more pleasing sacrifice to the great and glorious Author of your being, than instructing your children; teaching them an early habit of worshipping their Maker; talking to them of his goodness; and giving them lessons of sobriety, modesty, honesty, and contentment, by your *example* as well as speech. *Rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing*, is the advice of the Apostle; but *preach* without ceasing is the fashion of those who would set up for reformers in these days: prayer with them is quite a secondary thing, and, from the practice of some, should seem of no account, since we know that, even among those professing an excess of holiness in other respects, some will sit in their chimney-

corners on the sabbath-day, though the house of God is just at hand, where they might offer up their public supplications to Almighty God, in the communion of that church of which they most unworthily assert themselves to be pious members. Thus they hardly allow the benefit of prayer one day in the week; though the same Apostle, as if he had been describing the future model of our excellent Liturgy, exhorts, *that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life: for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.* Now, as the Apostle would never have prescribed what was impossible to be done in a strict literal sense, without breaking in upon other duties, we must look for the true meaning of this precept of *constant prayer*; for, if it had not been necessary, neither would he have advised it. The prayer here meant, in the *former* words of the Apostle, is not a frequent or continued repetition of formal worship, which belongs more properly to the *public* service of the Deity, as instanced in the *latter* passage, but the prayer of the *heart*; the short and true meaning of which is, *the will turned to God*; that kind of prayer which would have preserved our first parents innocent, and qualifies every action and suffering of us their fallen posterity.

This prayer is as much in the power of the most ignorant as of the greatest scholar: it requires no depth of thought, nor even knowledge of letters: the lonely shepherd in the field, the busy workman in the shop, the most polished courtier in the most splendid company, may equally employ it, and, by using it with sincerity of heart, render it acceptable to God; for, as he is every where present, fills all space, ordereth all events, and knoweth all things, we may lift up our hearts without being observed by any but Him who searcheth the heart; we may implore protection in a single wish; we may declare our praises by a grateful thought; we may be in the world, *and yet our conversation in heaven.* In this sense we may *pray without ceasing*, and be sure of being heard. I have given you this explanation, to show that you are without excuse, if you cease to petition *our Father who is in heaven.* But this spirit of prayer can never be understood or cultivated properly, without the benefit of those early and sound principles it has been my business to recommend throughout these several Discourses.

Outward, positive worship, must likewise be directed by sincerity of heart, to render it acceptable; and it only differs in this, that it has the obligation of an express command, added to the conscious impulse of our dependence upon God, and an humble trust in his promises:

it is equally necessary with the other; *for, where two or three are gathered together in his name, there he hath promised to be in the midst of them.* God hath appointed one day for that purpose, and the remainder of the week he hath, in mercy, as positively fixed for the use of man in the various offices of this life; intimating, by his own wise memorial, that the several duties of his creatures should be confined to the six days allotted them to work. But how few, even of those who would be thought more seriously disposed than other men, obey this express law of their Maker, but turn their backs upon the most holy ordinance he hath instituted for our good, and set up a law for themselves! They leave undone the things they are commanded to do; and do what might be left undone, without danger of transgressing. Nay, how few in comparison, show any visible alteration in their lives, or in the conduct of their children, with all their seeming zeal! how many, after attending *hours* at the places I have described, return without retaining *one* connected sentence of what they have been hearing! and how few can conscientiously declare they never go till they have nothing left undone at home that necessarily concerns the comfort of their husbands, wives, or families; or that this attendance is purely uninfluenced by idle curiosity, by the desire of the *loaves*

and fishes (i. e. the kind returns made them for this outward show of piety), and solely *from* religious motives, and a want of due instruction in their parish churches. If they would screen themselves under the judicious caution of, *Martha, thou art busy about many things, to the neglect of the one thing needful,* the apology will not apply. The employment here reproved by our blessed Lord, was a busy, needless, and ostentatious display of worldly compliment, in preference to religious knowledge, and not a sober and indispensable attention to the positive wants of a family, pursued in obedience to the divine precept of doing *every thing to the glory of God.*

Be not righteous over-much, has certainly a strange sound from this place, but it contains very useful sense; it advises the valuable lesson of self-examination. It does not signify that it is possible to be actually *too good;* but it directs to try the spirits, and not to depend upon a mask of holiness, that may adorn and deceive for a time, being the work of art, and not a change of nature, but which leaves the heart in the same deformity as an ugly face continues, that borrows the like covering.

Thus have I discharged what I conceive to be my duty to you on this occasion; at the same time, neither making personal attacks or uncharitable reproaches, but giving you an af-

fectionate exhortation against the too general and faulty custom of running from place to place, for what you may find abundantly provided in your own church. I have shown you that it is not needful to your salvation, and may be hurtful to your worldly interests, which it concerns every useful member of society to attend to, consistent with religious regulation. Nor do I verily believe such practice is required of any teacher or follower; because I no where find reasonable encouragement for it in the Scripture: and Christ having settled his church, and the order of administering his worship, he could never intend any new and valid mode that in its exercise is hostile to the form God's providence has established, without some prophecy of his own to warrant the practice of it.

I have my reasons for not giving in this place any fuller opinion concerning mixed and stated meetings elsewhere than in the appointed place of worship, by those who are professedly of the established church of this land. The conscience is a monitor that hath a powerful influence in devoutly disposed minds; but the *best may err*. I do not pretend authority to dispute its dictates in other people; but I may be allowed to account for any supposed failure in my own conduct in this respect. Some of the arguments for not countenancing any thing of the kind by my own example, have now been

delivered, and directed, I most humbly trust, by the purest desire for God's honour, and the preservation of solemn respect to our holy religion: for all pursuits of this cast must surely appear unnecessary, if you are only diligent in remembering what you hear twice on the Lord's day, besides the public examination and instruction of your children. But if any among the more religious are earnest for still further profitable employment of the time their leisure may afford on that day, I would suggest a practice that must meet the approbation of every steady mind; and that is, the service being ended, to retire to your own houses, and there, after calling upon God in a short private prayer of praise for the mercies afforded you of serving him, and for grace to profit by it, pass the few hours that remain in discoursing upon these subjects; comparing them (if you can read) with the Holy Scripture, from which they are faithfully drawn, and urging those who look up to your example to join in application to God in their hearts to enable you to carry your good resolutions into practice. As all truly religious persons, like those of a different description, will always be inclined to seek each other's company, the inconvenience of wanting learning may be easily repaired, by applying to those who have had the advantage of so useful a part of education; and if not one in the parish could read (desire-

able as the attainment is), the *heart* and *conscience* remain still the same; the one ever requiring amendment, the other as busy in accusing and admonishing to reform; and both equally open to God. He will not judge you for what you have not, nor can possibly get; but only for what you *have* and *abuse*. Follow, then, that candle of the Lord as far as it lights you; pray and strive to improve your corrupted nature, and fear not but all will end happily.

If it is said, that during one part of the year the days afford more time of leisure than during the other, after evening service; most of this counsel may be equally followed while you indulge the innocent amusement of walking in the fields, or in occasional visits to your friends. The cheering prospect of the new-clothed country, and the manifold beauties and goodness of God's works, will help an humble and religious turn of thought: but this employment should never interfere with the stated hours of divine service.

As to attending these unlicensed meetings, being the happy means (as some suppose) of removing the dangerous practice of frequenting public houses, it is an idle observation; for, *no truly* good persons will waste their time and money on the Lord's day in such improper courses, after regularly attending the public worship; on the contrary, the travelling

a *distance* from *home* for the purpose of hearing *fine preachers*, may tend, through fatigue, the solicitation of companions, or need of refreshment, to the particular transgression such pursuits are thought calculated to prevent.

As for you who *can* read, whose children enjoy the same benefit, it is your duty, when you return from this holy place, to pass a *part* of the remaining day, at least, in the useful exercise of the talents God has pleased to bestow upon you, by consulting his word, for the general improvement of yourselves and families. These are in *themselves* little religious meetings, supported by propriety, good sense, and decency; and, depend upon it, God requires no further as a positive mark of duty to him in this respect. But these are obligations which, as Christian parents, masters, and mistresses, it is incumbent on you to perform; and for the neglect of which you will be accountable at the great day of the Lord.

My good friends, I would risk my own salvation on the event, that if you follow all this counsel uniformly, with an earnest desire to better your lives, in order that you may promote the glory of God; always looking up to Him, without whom you can do nothing; who endured unto the death, that you through him might obtain victory: if you seriously lay to heart what may be collected from this place, and with a truly humble spirit endeavour to

practise it; not building any *merit* upon your own righteousness, but seeking His aid, *who worketh in you both to will and to do*; and if you constantly use the devout prayers of the Church to help you forward in the task and trial of your lives: if you do all this, I say, from a real principle of love to God, a fear of offending him, and a regard for the salvation of your souls, you will have passed the sabbath-day religiously and profitably, nor need further instruction from me, or any other person.

And now, having dwelt so long and very minutely on the subject of my earnest desire to pursue those plans most likely to store your minds with solid principles of Christian faith, and to direct your steps in the sure way of regular and useful practice, I trust the smallest suspicion cannot remain with any, of my being regardless of your grand concerns.

With God's blessing on my poor endeavours, I shall carefully attend to every essential article that may forward this *one thing needful*, consistent with the conduct of my public charge. With regard to the many particulars touched upon in this *latter* portion of my address, I could not allow myself to neglect a proper opportunity of delivering my free opinions to you, agreeable to the rules laid down for my professional duties, and that under due application to the Throne of Grace to direct me for your

advancement in true religion and virtue, and at the same time to help my own salvation. I now commend you, my friends, to God's blessed guidance and protection; with this renewal of earnest exhortation and most affectionate advice, that you will not build too much hope on *hearing* of the word (wheresoever, or by whomsoever, it is delivered), but always keep in mind what Scripture affirms, in words which cannot be mistaken, "that *not the* HEARERS *only*, but *the* DOERS, of the word shall be *saved*."

Now, &c.

THE END.

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